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The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and specialty greenhouse cuts

Inside this Issue

From the President.....3
The 2009 Lilyade... 4
Culture Profile.....8
Small Things Considered.....10
Book Review.....12
IPM Update.....14
Research Update.....16
Grower Profile.....18
Back to Basics.....22
Temporary Like Achilles.....24
Regional Reports.....27
ASCFG News.....35
Classifieds.....37
National Conference 42
From the Director.....46

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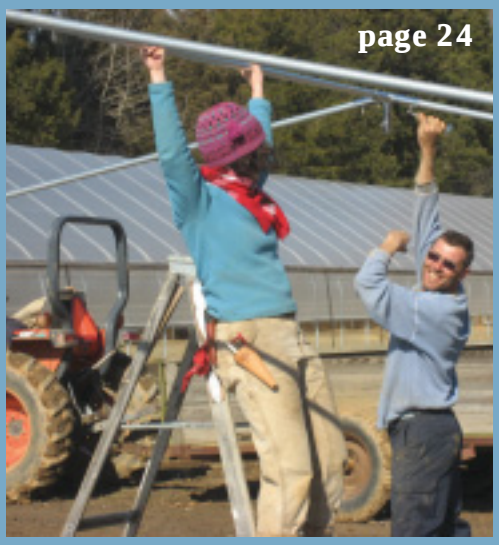

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FROM *the President*

Dave Dowling

Wall Street, Main Street, General Motors, TARP, stock market losses, falling GDP, rising unemployment. The "doom & gloom" list seems to go on forever. Reading or hearing about "bad economic data" every time you log onto the Internet, or tune in the news, it's hard not to become discouraged when it seems every bit of news is about how bad things are and how it's going to be a long time before a "recovery" and things are back to normal – whatever "normal" may be when it does finally return. I'm always amazed at how the stock market will tumble because some mega company had *only* four billion in sales with a 2% increase one month, when some Wall Street "analyst" projected it would have 4.1 billion in sales with an increase of 2.1% or something crazy like that.

I'm just glad my business doesn't hinge on someone else's interpretation of how they predict things will be in any given time period. I know how often things don't turn out how I expect; I can't imagine if a bunch of number crunchers sitting in an office with a Ouija board were trying to predict my company's future. It makes my head spin just to think about it. We all know that there isn't a crystal ball big enough to handle all the variables like weather, pests, labor, marketing, etc. that affect the type of businesses we run.

I like to say that every year we should plan for our biggest season ever. Then go out and make it happen. Grow some new varieties, increase production, add new markets, florists, or wholesalers. Maybe start doing weddings or events. Find something to do and look for ways to make it happen. It's up to you. Sure, there may be times when you try something that doesn't work. That's when we need to make some lemonade, savor the tangy sweetness, regroup and try something new.

Like your Mom said, "You won't know until you try it". Mom was usually talking about something like turnips, not cut flowers, but you get the idea. It's not too late to plant a few new varieties or an extra bed or two of a crop that is always a success on your farm.

This year's ASCFG National Conference will be held October 5-8 in Hauppauge, New York on Long Island. Included will be a full day of educational seminars about producing floral designs for weddings and events. This is a "must attend" day for anyone already doing weddings, or for those growers who would like to add this profitable aspect to their business repertoire. Some great tour sites are included in this year's meeting, along with educational sessions that can help improve your cut flower business.

I hope everyone has a successful season. I'll see you in Hauppauge in October.

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Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	ORDER:			1	2	3	4
28	Lilies	6	7	8	9	10	11
29	Tulips	13	14	15	16	17	18
30	Iris	20	21	22	23	24	25
31	Ranunculus	27	28	29	30	31	1
	Daffodils						

August 2009

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
32	2					7	8
33		10	11			14	15
34	16	17	18	19	20		
35	23	24	25				
36	30	31					

ORDER:
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Ranunculus
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September 2009

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
36				2	3		
37	6				10	11	
38	13				17	18	
39	20	21	22	23	24		
40	27	28	29	30			

ORDER:
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Ranunculus
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October 2009

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
40					1	2	3
41	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
42	11						17
43	18						24
44	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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Since I spend much of my time marketing and promoting the genus *Lilium*, I recently had the opportunity to go to Holland and spend some of that time at Keukenhof. This is the world's largest flower bulb display garden, and it celebrated its 60th year this spring. Like taking my three boys to the playground where they have the time of their life, I have found my own playground by going to Keukenhof and taking it all in.

The outdoor flower bulb displays in the park are just absolutely gorgeous. But the main reason for me going the week of Mother's Day is because the Willem-Alexander Pavilion holds the world's largest display of lily flowers in an arranged format. I have heard over the years that the displays hold as many as 20,000 lily stems in one building! So after spending all day long looking around, reviewing, and smelling every variety, my nasal passages are clogged up with pollen, therefore hardly being able to sniff up the aroma of a great dinner afterwards. But it is worth it all, because I do come back to the USA loaded with information and data ready to share with my customers.

In the Spring 2009 issue of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* there was a great article written by David G. Clark about floral fragrance. David mentioned that fragrance has been lost due to the breeders focusing on flower color and longevity. Fragrance is an unconscious but strong deciding factor in impulse buying that we all have fallen victim to. Have you ever walked through a town where the local pastry bakery pumps its fragrance right out to the street? Well, they always get me, and if they have fresh coffee, I smell that as well, so I get one of those to wash down the pastry. Or if someone in my neighborhood is cooking out on the barbeque, I have to investigate where that aroma is coming from, and while I am walking over, I hope and pray they might have some extra.

"Give Me Lilies in Armfuls"

Okay, enough of food. I do agree with David Clark that a lot of flower fragrance has been lost, and replaced with chemical fragrances. Can we no longer stop and smell the roses?

I have to tell you that is not the case with lilies. With Oriental lilies especially, fragrance is still strong. Some older varieties can be very pungent; newer varieties have a much more pleasant fragrance. The unique characteristic of lilies is that because of their fragrance, presentation and performance, they are one of the best cut flowers consumers can get their hands on. No wonder lilies are one of the top 3 cut flowers out there, together with roses and chrysanthemums.

The most interesting conversation I had was with a fellow *Lilium* specialist in Holland, about our industry having created *too perfect* of a crop for the market place. Have we made the flower sizes too big? Is the stem buildup too large? Have we gotten too far out in left field with hybridizing? Other questions came up: where are new opportunities and what should we focus on? A couple of things stood out clearly to me.

• Floral fragrance is in (was it ever out?), and hybridizing can provide a more subtle and pleasant fragrance in the near future. Some varieties already do, like Oriental 'Presidente' which has a pleasant fruity fragrance.

• Pollen-stainless varieties. Consumers do desire stainless, or 'pollen-free' lilies. This of course needs to be accomplished through hybridizing.

• Double-flowering varieties. En route to you! I have seen the first ones. The market will be growing quality double varieties within the next 5 years.

• Commercial species varieties. This is challenging because everybody loves the unique and different species, or early hybrids that are so hard to come by. The challenge is that although they do have ornamental value for the garden, and in small quantity in cut flower production, it is not commercially viable to go into large-scale bulb production, hoping that the market might pick them up. I do think that there is a market for the species type, but it will be more for gardens and patios.

• Brushmarks. These are the tigers, spiders, pixels and other painted ones, and they're becoming more available. Just like with the first generation of LA-hybrids, within this group you do see some early bird challenges that the hybridizers are trying to improve on. Many varieties have weaker stems, smaller flowers, or the coloration is not defined enough. But since these are unique, they do start to find their way into the market and these varieties will hold on until more improved ones take over. As soon as we have them with stronger stems and larger flowers, the market will get to enjoy them.

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Ko Knows What's Best

There are many great varieties out there. Here are my Top Ten favorites.

1. **OT 'Candy Club'**. Specially colored OT is an absolutely stunning pink/white variety, and can be used from the size 14/16. This variety came through exceptionally.
2. **OR 'Lake Carey'**. This is one of the most vibrant flower colors I have ever seen, almost electric. Although it does have a bit of nutrition uptake challenge in the beginning, before you cut it the foliage will green up. It is worth it for the flower.
3. **OR 'Alessia'**. Nice balance. Excellent for winter production because of its strong stems. The clear white color is a sharp contrast to the gold band. All flowers are up facing.
4. **OR 'Presidente'**. High volume lily. Nice leaf shape, big buds and always up facing. The stem is very sturdy and not too tall which make this variety very good for winter forcing. And do not forget, this one has that light fruity fragrance.
5. **LA 'Trebbiano'**. Very strong cream-green variety. Flowers are a bit outfacing but are on very strong stems! Just a knockout variety.
6. **OT 'Saltarello'**. This cantaloupe-salmon OT has one of the nicest presentations in bud stage. The flower petals do curl back a bit when they mature, but it is a stunning variety.
7. **OR 'Millesimo'** is a beautiful pink-edged flower. Ideally it will hold its color in the summer heat. This variety reminds me of tulip 'Shirley'; same color scheme.
8. **OR 'Tiger Woods'**. A gorgeous unique tiger flower Oriental lily. Worth trying out.
9. **LA 'Nashville'**. I really like this yellow LA, with its full, large flowers. A true yellow, as you see in daffodil 'King Alfred'.
10. **AS 'Tebaldi'**. Orange as orange can be, with dark stems and shiny foliage. Tremendous bud count make its overall presentation almost perfect.

I hope I got your taste buds going again for this and next year. And if for some reason you do plan to go Holland let us know, because Zabo Plant Holland does have one of those great coffee machines in our break room, and that is where we have found several of our visitors. With an appointment you are always welcome to visit our test greenhouses. If you cannot come, but still want to see the results, go to www.zaboplant.nl

Wishing you a happy & prosperous cut flower season!

Ko Klaver is lily specialist Zabo Plant.
Contact him at ko@zaboplant.com

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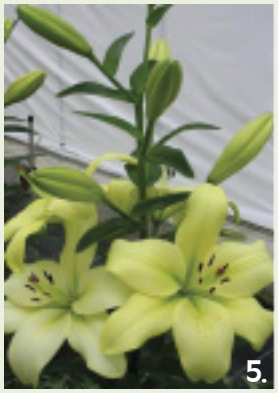
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CULTURE *Profile*

Shravan Dasoju and Lourdes Reyes,
PanAmerican Seed / Ball SB

Dianthus Sweet Series

This series from can Seed is suitable for cut flower greenhouse and field cut flower production, providing excellent bouquet fillers as well as unique focal flowers. Blooms have a sweet fragrance and a long vase life. Stems hold shiny dark green leaves, which contrast with the vibrant colors of the flowers.

Sweet produces in each straight, long stem a very fragrant, well-formed round head, packed with vibrant, lasting blooms. Five colors are available:

- 'White'— a pure white which combines well with other colors, a year-round "must".
- 'Red'— dark deep red.
- 'Deep Purple'—excellent for fall, and trendy burgundy/ green Christmas decorations.
- 'Coral'—salmon pink, a year-round must.
- 'Scarlet'— The true Christmas red!

It is very important to have a well-rounded head for Sweet to show its maximum grandeur in the head size volume and full color, and this can be achieved only by cutting at the correct cutting stage. Ball recommends to harvest when the head is fully open, or at least when it shows 7 to 8 open florets.

When used in bouquets, Sweet gives volume and color. As a consumer bunch it provides not only fragrance but a vintage look, so much in fashion now. It has been used in consumer bunches from 3 to 30 stems. Sweet also performs well in the "rainbow type" bunches (bunches of the same variety in different colors).

A bunch of 'White' and 'Scarlet' Sweets is a perfect Valentine bouquet by itself, and if you add just a little green, like some eucalyptus stems or green leaves or even a green wrapping , you get a great Christmas bouquet! For the ideal 4th of July bouquet use the same 'White' and 'Scarlet'and add some true blue delphinium stems. 'White' and 'Coral' combined look great for Easter or Mother's Day.

Sweet dianthus for commercial cut flower programs can produce high yields of saleable stems for greenhouse and field production. Plants reach 18 to 36 inches (45 to 90 cm), with tallest growth resulting from early fall-transplanted, greenhouse-grown plants. Vernalization is not required.

Plug / Seedling Production

Sweet is available as pelleted seed for easier sowing with a germination standard of 90%.
For sowing, use a well-drained, disease-free plug medium with a pH of 5.8 to 6.2 and an EC of 0.5 to 0.75 mmhos/cm. Seed can be germinated at 64 to 68F (18 to 20C). After germination, seedlings can be grown at 65 to 70F (18 to 20C) day and 55 to 60F (13 to 15C) night temperatures. When the seedlings are approximately 2 weeks old from sowing, start fertilizing with 50ppm N twice a week. As the true leaves develop, increase the fertilizer rate to 100 ppm. Maintain the plug media EC at 0.75 to 1.0 mmhos/cm and pH at 5.8 to 6.2. The average plug production time is 4 to 5 weeks from sowing.

Growing On to Harvest

Transplant the plugs directly into ground beds approximately 4 to 5 weeks after sowing. Under North American conditions planting density can be 3 to 9 plants/ft^2 (approx 32 to 96 plants/ m^2). The higher density can be used at the beginning and end of the season to get good stem length, and for single stem production. If needed, the crop can be pinched, which can be done when plants are approximately 6" tall. Pinch back to 2-3

inches from the ground. A single layer of support netting is recommended, it can be raised accordingly as the crop grows.

Make sure the soil is well drained before transplanting. Maintain optimal soil moisture during production and irrigate accordingly. After the plugs are established, apply 200 ppm N per week using calcium nitrate fertilizer, which occasionally can substituted for with a well-balanced fertilizer at the same rate of N. Maintain an EC of 1.5 to 2.0 mmhos/cm. Note that dianthus requires adequate Calcium in their fertilization program.

Sweet can be grown successfully in full sun, but when grown under plastic tunnels or in a high-light greenhouse will yield better quality. Under high light and high heat conditions the stems will be shorter. In the highland tropics, artificial light is not necessary but some growers use mum lighting during short days to even up the uniformity of the crop. Optimal temperatures during production can be 60 to 75F (15 to 24C). Sweet dianthus can tolerate night temperatures as low as 45F (7C).

Harvest the stems when there are at least 7 to 8 open florets. Place them immediately in water with a preservative such as STS for 4 hours to prevent ethylene damage. Stem length under North American field conditions will be around 18 to 24 inches (45 to 60 cm) whereas under highland tropics it can be approximately 36 inches (90 cm).

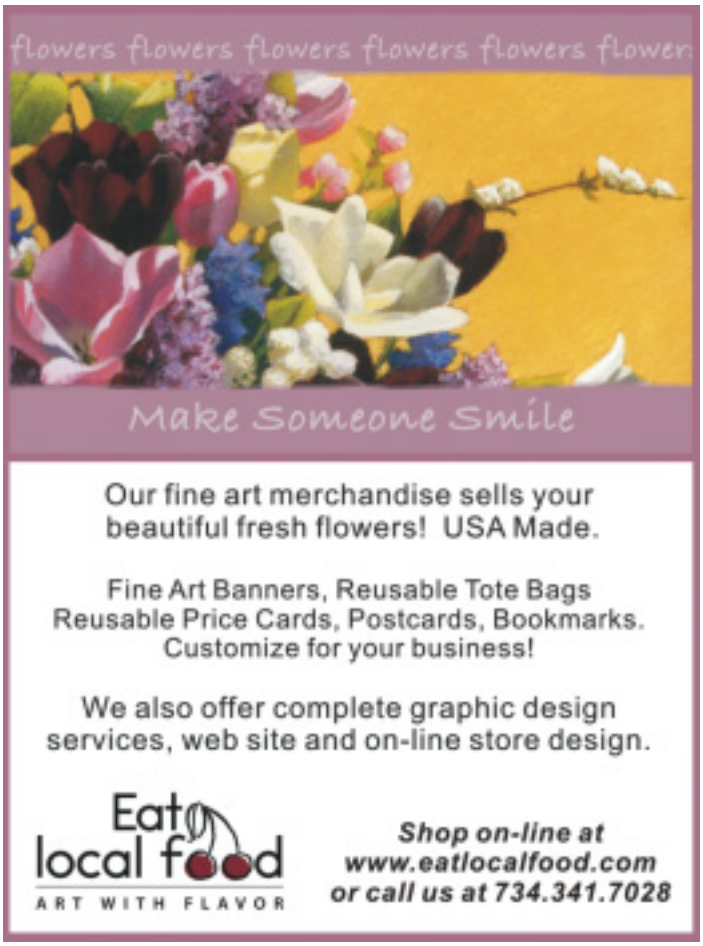
Monitor and scout during production for pests and disease such as leaf miners, powdery mildew, rust, and fusarium.

Crop Schedule

Under North American conditions, Sweet dianthus can be transplanted year-round in coastal California or similar climates, where mid-August to February 1st transplants will develop the best stem length. Stems harvested from April to July transplants may not be of sufficient length for commercial production, depending on the environment. Greenhouse-grown plants generally produce taller stems than plants that are field-grown. Flowers can be harvested continuously for approximately 2 to 3 weeks. If cut back, a second flush of flowers will be ready to harvest in about 8 to 10 weeks, but the quality will not be the same as the first flush. Note that a second crop is advisable only from autumn harvest, so that the second flush develops under cooler conditions of late autumn and winter, and builds up a stronger plant.

Sweet takes approximately 4 to 5 weeks from sowing to transplant. From transplant to first flower, spring/late summer takes approximately 11 weeks, fall/winter takes 12 to 16 weeks.

Contact Shravan Dasoju at Sdasoju@ballhort.com and Lourdes Reyes at lreyes@ballsb.com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SMALL *Things Considered*

Gay Smith

Hard-to-Hydrate Cuts and Foliages

"You can't make chicken soup out of chicken poop." explained my mentor friend as we sat sipping our Heinekens on a sunny afternoon in Amsterdam, discussing the finer points of rose breeding. I've softened the vernacular slightly, but his candor still rings true. This aphorism sprang to mind as I read recent ASCFG Bulletin Board replies to Alicain Carlson's (NCSU) request for suggestions of hard-to-hydrate cut flowers and foliages. Comments took several directions, including queries about what had the biggest effect on vase longevity, postharvest treatments, growing methods or age of plants. No question about it, longevity involves a matrix of production variables including chemical use vs. organic methods, amount and quality of light, day and night temperatures, soil—its structure and nutrient levels, and of course the quality of the starting water. All of these factors exert pressure on successful flower performance.

It is true that the best postharvest solutions only maximize a flower's vase life potential inherent on the genetics of the variety and growing conditions. No postharvest hydration or flower food solution will make a bad flower good (remember the chicken soup reference). The importance of treatments that lower pH and check pollution has been recognized for years. More recent research is focusing on finding effective treatments acceptable for organic certification, and silver-free solutions for ethylene protection.

Another consideration affecting vase life is the age of the plants. As one grower observed, age, more than postharvest treatments, makes the difference in vase longevity of tansy and eucalyptus. Very true; growers replant on a regular schedule because productivity declines as plants age, which affects the number of stems harvested per square foot, an important measuring stick in determining the profitability of every product. There is no glory in falling in love with a non-profitable variety.

Timing is Everything

One detail affecting hydration success (or lack of) is the importance of getting stems into solution *immediately* after being cut, before tissues start to close and callous over. I'm not referring solely to cut at harvest, but every time stems are recut. Research has proven that flowers start to "heal" wounds very fast, some as quickly as 7 to 30 seconds. The take-home message is simple: get buckets set up (and solution chilled) before you give the stems a final cut. Another compelling reason to make speedy transfers after cutting is to prevent stems from "gulping" air, which blocks vascular tissues. On the other end of the rapid chop and drop spectrum are bulb flowers, which tend to pull solution quite well through callous tissues. Floral industry consultant J Schwanke recently shared a care and handling tip about freesia. He recommends bouquet makers, wholesalers and designers never give freesia a fresh cut because doing so triggers internal production of ethylene, which prevents florets from opening. I could not find any research to back his claims, but J claims years of real-life experience more than prove this recommendation to be true.

When establishing handling procedures, stay focused on the importance of maintaining good water relationship in the stems. Plants (and cut stems) work to equalize the moisture level of the microenvironment surrounding petals and leaves. Water imbalances occur the minute blooms are harvested because stems stop taking in water through the root system, but continue losing it, primarily through stoma in leaves (transpiration). Wilting is the obvious symptom of an unbalanced water relationship, but the stress caused by unbalanced water relations robs flowers of vase life long before wilting is apparent. Avoiding any source of stress assures maximum vase performance. Ways to reduce flower stress includes getting the field heat out of the freshly harvested products fast and getting stomata closed to slow down transpiration (stop water loss). All of which makes it critical to move cuts into shade or into coolers as quickly as possible after harvest and pre-chill solutions to maximize uptake while minimizing bloom opening.

Tough Questions

To answer the ubiquitous question of what's the best solution, we need to back up and look at what happens regardless of what solution the flowers drink. Research shows that +/- 75% of entire uptake happens in the first hour. Uptake slows down considerably as the water balance is regained. Because initial uptake is so dramatic, it is important that the first solution contain a germicide to keep bacteria in check, this way, bacteria stem plugging is minimized. Chlorine is one of the most aggressive and economical

biocides available. Slow-release chlorine offers a prolonged effect of 2- 4 days and so is recommended over sodium hypochlorite (bleach) which loses its "active" effect within +/-12hrs. Chlorine solutions are all and only about killing bacteria. They do not lower the pH or boost flow through cells.

Other hydration compounds offer different advantages. Solutions that acidify the water to a pH level to lower than 5.0 help boost flow because air bubbles dissolve more readily in acidic solutions. The addition of a wetting agent (agricultural soap) helps break the surface tension of water which improves movement through vascular tissues, too. One detail that is completely non-chemical, but important nevertheless, is keeping shears and cutters sharp to avoid ragged ends that leak cells and organic material into solution stimulating bacteria development.

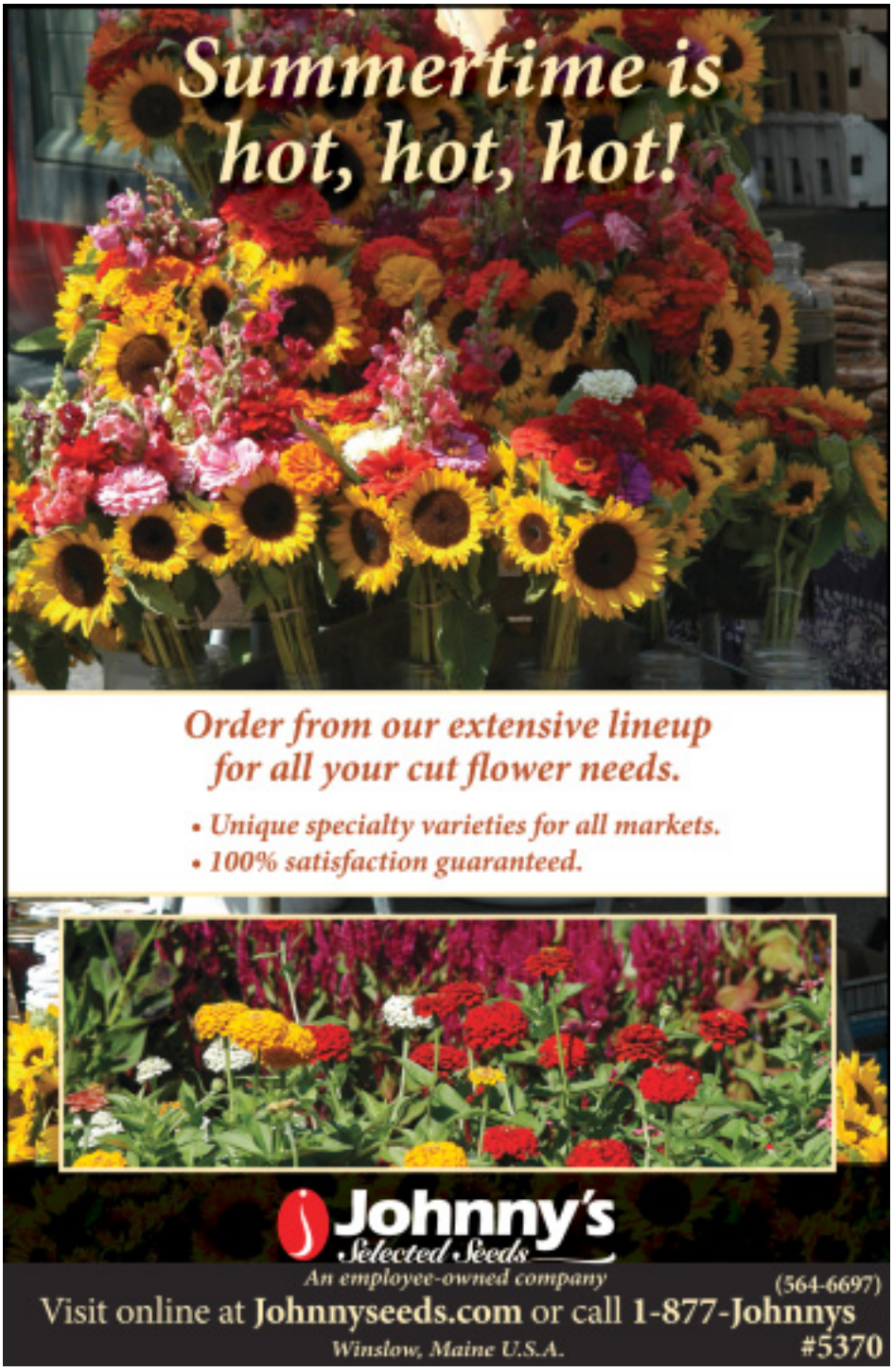
Discovering the best solution for your crop is worth the time invested to make comparison tests. University research and independent testing provide excellent guidelines, but often, information on specific specialty crops does not exist. It's important to make your own comparison tests of different solutions with your water and the specific flower varieties you produce. Testing need not be elaborate. A few simple steps provide the information needed to decide which treatment(s) and brands work best in your conditions.

Do It Yourself

Here are a few guidelines for setting up your own postharvest trials.

- Test stems from same harvest, same day, same everything and use water as a control treatment.
- If comparing 3 treatments, divide stems into 3 equal amounts, sleeve the product and place in same size vases.
- Normally, flowers should be left no more than 3 days in hydration solutions since these formulas have no sugar and ultimately, flowers need carbohydrates to take them all the way to the end. But for comparison sake, push the limits so you feel confident the results reflect the outside curve of the longest time you might have to rotate blooms.
- When setting up vases, include date, treatment and variety name. Mix solutions according to manufacturer's directions. Be consistent-use same amount of solution when filling vases.
- After stems are appropriately divided into the vases, place flowers in the cooler and leave for 2-5 days to simulate the longest stretch of your current rotation system.
- After cooler period is over, transfer into vases with tap water at room temperature. Watch to the end.

For sure, vase life will be longer if you use flower food in the vases at the end, but since you want to see which is the best postharvest *pre*-treatment, tap water will give you the clear picture. Flower food could have a masking effect.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So What's the Best Solution?

Flowers that give a milky sap, foul the water fast or are sensitive to stem plugging respond well to slow-release chlorine. This group include dahlias, marigolds, zinnias, kale, gerberas and callas.

Flowers sensitive to ethylene gas exposure (internally produced or from external sources), require STS as the first drink. Dicentra, aconitum, all the delphinium species and larkspur fall into this category. STS (Chrysal AVB) is registered for use only in California, Florida, Michigan, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. If you are located outside these states, consider using Ethylbloc (Floralife) to prevent sensitive blooms from shattering and premature death.

Growers report good results hydrating cotinus and weigela in solutions containing a surfactant (wetting agent) to boost flow. Lilac, hellebores, erynigium, photinus, hypericum and hydrangeas benefit from solutions based on aluminum sulfate as the acidifier and germicide.

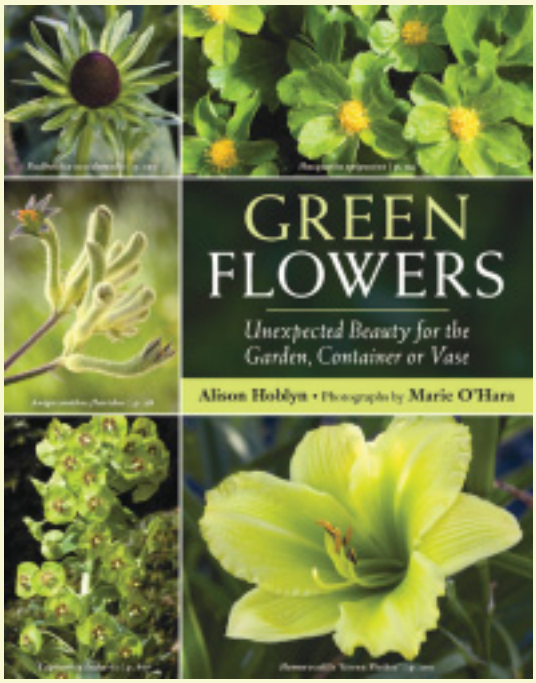
Flower treatments are not all created equal. Compare different products to find what gives maximum results with your water and your handling procedures. In this tough economy, customers are looking for top value in every dollar they spend and vase life is the measuring stick for value with flowers.

Gay Smith is the Technical Consulting Manager for Chrysal USA. Contact her at gaysmith@earthlink.net

Book Review

Judy Laushman

Green Flowers: Unexpected Beauty for the Garden, Container or Vase
Alison Hoblyn
Timber Press, 2009



"Green is the flower arranger's friend, helping to show off complementary reds and pinks or harmonizing with yellows and blues." writes author Alison Hoblyn in this slim new volume from Timber Press.

Looking through the last few years of *The Cut Flower Quarterly*, I'd have to agree. Our covers have featured delphinium 'Green Twist', aster 'Hulk', and eryngium 'White Glitter' (which looks pretty green to me). You'll remember the fanfare that greeted the arrival of Benary's 'Giant Lime' zinnia and Spring Meadow's 'Limelight' hydrangea.

If you're already including these flowers in your crop mix, or are so over bells of Ireland, bupleurum or the green version of Queen Anne's lace (*Ammi visnaga*), check out some of the beautiful plants featured in *Green Flowers*.

Some recommendations are straight species, such as *Ribes nigrum*, with its pendent flowers of yellow green, or *Euphorbia lathyris*, caper surge, while others are cultivars of common garden plants, like *Kniphofia* 'Green Jade' or *Chrysanthemum* 'Shamrock'. Some are as well-known as *Cyperus papyrus*, others may be in your "Why didn't I think of that?" category, such as common teasel, *Dipsacus fullonum*. Some may be part of your "In my dreams" list, like *Garrya elliptica*, silk tassel bush, which looks lovely in the photo, but practically screams "I shatter easily." from the page.

Although the book likely was not written expressly for cut flower growers, the author obligingly provides care and cultivation tips, as well as floral design uses for most entries. The full-page color photographs are useful as well as striking, and brief sidebars on history or etymology of the plants make the reading interesting. As if the author anticipated specialty cut flower growers using her book as a reference, she includes herbaceous perennials, bulbs, grasses, and woody shrubs and trees.

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IPM Update

Stanton Gill

Basil - A Money Machine

Edible landscapes are "in" for 2009 and basil, with its multitude of uses, is the perfect plant for cut flower growers to make money with this year. Customers cannot seem to get enough basil, and why not? Producing their own food is important to people in bad economies. Basil serves multiple roles: ornamental plants, culinary herbs, condiment or spice, and as a source of aromatic essential oils for use in foods, flavors, and fragrances. Growers can use this to market their plants as landscape plants customers can use to dress up a food dish. Since most are grown from seed it is inexpensive to produce compared to the price you find in the marketplace.

The aromatic leaves are used in salads, and can be used fresh or dried to add flavors or spices in stews, vegetable, poultry, meat, vinegars, pesto and pasta dishes. Aside from its culinary use, basil is used by some people for medicinal purposes. Basils have been known to treat headaches, coughs, diarrhea, constipation, stomach aches, worms, warts and kidney malfunctions.

Growers can offer customers an array of options, including sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), Thai basil (*O. basilicum* var. *thyrsiflorum* 'Siam Queen'), Genovese basil (*O. basilicum* 'Genovese Gigante')or Fino verde basil (*O. basilicum piccolo).* Other popular cultivars of *O. basilicum* include 'Cinnamon', 'Licorice', 'Spicy Globe', 'Purple Ruffles', 'Magical Michael', 'Lettuce Leaf', 'Mammoth', 'Red Rubin', and 'Nufar'.

Dark opal basil (*O. basilicum purpurascens*), Cuban basil (*O. basilicum*), Mrs. Burns lemon basil (*O. basilicum* var. *citriodora* 'Mrs. Burns') and 'Osmin Purple' are also available. This gives growers lots of options, flavors, forms, and foliage color and shape to offer customers

The main types grown in greenhouses are the large-leaved, highly aromatic French or Italian types, though many growers are finding that different leaf shapes and aromas sell well. People are willing to experiment and pay for basil that have aroma of lemon, licorice or cinnamon.

Good Basil/Bad Basil

So much for all the good things about basil. Nothing you grow in a greenhouse can be all this easy, otherwise everyone would be growing it. What are some of the diseases and insects growers need to watch out for?

Botrytis. In the spring, when the rainy season can provide cloud cover for several days in a row, basil must be monitored for botrytis stem canker. This disease causes darkened stem lesions and collapse of the plants. Under high humidity conditions, growers may see gray-brown, fuzzy fungal growth on the cankered stems. Do not water the plants in the evening and try to keep watering to a minimum during the extended cloudy periods to reduce humidity around the plants. Keep the growing area clean of plant debris, which can be colonized by botrytis and serve as a source of infection for your crop.

Botryitis on Basil

INSV. Basil is also susceptible to Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus (INSV). The thrips-vectored virus causes chlorotic mottling and necrotic ringspots on the leaves of infected basil plants. If other crops in the greenhouse have INSV, check your basil for infection as well. Strict thrips control of thrips and discarding all infected plants are the only effective management strategies for this disease.

Fusarium. Fusarium wilt of basil is caused by *Fusarium oxysporum f.basilicum.* This disease was first reported in the United States in the early 1990s. Symptoms include wilting, yellowing, and stunting. Infected plants may develop brown streaks on the stem as well as brown discoloration in the vascular system. Infected plants will eventually die. The fungus can be spread through contaminated seed or soil. The best thing a grower can do to avoid fusarium wilt is purchase seed from a clean, reliable sources. Some selections of basil are more resistant to fusarium. Resistant selections include 'Nufer','Nufresh', 'Aroma 2', and 'Green Gate'.

Downy Mildew. Downy mildew is a newly emerging disease of basil. This disease was first detected in the U.S. in Florida in 2007, and last year there were numerous reports throughout the eastern United States in both greenhouse- and field-grown basil. Because of the sudden outbreak and quick spread of this disease, scientists will be monitoring basil sentinel plots this year

to trace pathogen movement. Dr. Meg McGrath, vegetable pathologist at Cornell University, has posted a very informative article, with several nice photos, on her website: http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/BasilDowny.html#Report

Symptoms on downy mildew on basil can be quite subtle, starting as a blotchy chlorosis on the upper leaf surface. Gray, fuzzy growth consisting of the spore structures of the pathogen can be seen on the undersides of chlorotic leaves. As the disease progresses, the chlorotic areas leaves become brown. Symptoms of the pathogen are very similar to downy mildew of coleus. In fact, the basil strain was once thought to be the same as coleus downy mildew. New research has found that the two strains are different: basil downy mildew is known to affect only basil. Dr. McGrath reports that two phosphorus acid fungicides, ProPhyt and K-Phite, were effective in managing the disease and both have downy mildew listed under herbs on the current label, at least for greenhouse use. In addition, Actinovate AG is also labeled for suppression of foliar disease, such as downy mildew on herbs.

Insects to Watch for on Basil

In the summer we find melon aphid and greenhouse peach aphid on basil plants. Melon aphids tend to be found in the center of the plants in early infestations. Green peach aphids build up on tip growth of plants.

As it warms up in summer check the plants for thrips. Basil is not a preferred plant but if you have thrips in the greenhouse they can cause a fair amount of damage to the plants. If you are growing basil organically you can use spinosad sold under the name Entrust Naturalyte Insect Control, from Dow AgroSciences. You will not find herbs or greenhouse use listed on the regular label. The supplemental labeling from Dow AgroSciences list thrips at a rate of 0.023 oz (0.65 grams/ gallon of water. It is not inexpensive so use it wisely.

On the biological side you can release *Amblyseius cucumeris* to keep thrips' larval population suppressed on herbs.

Basil with Slug Injury

Aphid and Thrips Control

Commercial product	Active ingredient	Company
Azatrol	Azadirachtin	PBI/Gordon Corp
Nemix	Azadirachtin	Certis Company
Aza-Direct	Azadirachtin	Gowan Company

Citrus mealybugs will find your basil and love them to death, if you don't stay on top of them. Neem products can be used to suppress mealybug populations. Our Maryland growers found that applying insecticidal soap followed by a oil application provides the best control.

Stanton Gill is Regional Specialist in IPM for greenhouses and nurseries, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, and Professor with the Landscape Technology Program, Montgomery College. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu Karen Rane is Director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension. Contact her at Rane@umd.edu

RESEARCH *Update*

Megan Bame

Funding for this column is provided by the ASCFG Research Committee

Paracetic Acid Leads to Longer Vase Life of Lisianthus

While a chlorine compound is commonly used as an antimicrobial agent to decrease the number of bacteria in vase water and increase flower longevity, studies have shown that sodium hypochlorite is not as effective in acidified solutions, typical of hydrating solutions for cut flowers. Efficiency is also decreased in the presence of organic matter,and several human and environmental health concerns are related to chlorine use. This study, conducted in Spain, assessed the vase life of lisianthus by comparing a chlorine-treated holding solution with a holding solution utilizing peracetic acid (PAA), an alternative bactericide.

Lisianthus (*Eustoma grandiflorum*) was grown in Spain for harvest in early October and early June. The cultivars grown were 'Mariachi Blue', 'Mariachi Green', 'Mariachi Blue Picotee', 'Mariachi Pink', 'Rosita White' and 'Piccolo White' 1. Stems were cut at commercial maturity with one flower open and a second opening. Stem length was cut to approximately 70 cm (27.5 in). Treatments consisted of 18 stems per vase with 1.5 L (1.5 qt) of solution, refilled every two days and completely renewed weekly. When the number of flowers per vase fell to fewer than six, vase life was terminated.

The four treatment solutions were: 1) tap water, 2) 3% sucrose solution, 3) 1 mL/L sodium hypochlorite with 12.5% free chlorine concentration, and 4) a stabilized peracetic mixed system consisting of 5% peracetic acid and 24% hydrogen peroxide.

The average vase life of lisianthus in a tap water solution was about 2 weeks. The addition of 3% sucrose extended vase life by 15 percent to 50 percent. The addition of stabilized hydrogen peroxide and PAA extended vase life by 30 percent to 55 percent. While there was no significant difference between the treatments of sodium hypochlorite and the PAA mixture, this study concluded the use of PAA is a suitable alternative since it is more environmentally friendly and poses fewer human health risks.

*de la Riva, F., P.C. Mazuela, J.E. Alvaro and M. Urrestatazu, 2009. Treatment with Peracetic Acid Extends the Vase Life of Lisianthus (*Eustoma grandiflorum*) Flowers. HortScience 44(2) pp. 418-420.*

Microenvironmental Variations in High Tunnel Production

There is increasing interest in using high tunnels, rudimentary greenhouses covered with a single layer of polyethylene, for low-cost season extension in growing fruits, vegetables and cut flowers. The plants are protected from wind and rain and have decreased disease pressure. This research at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York, characterized the spatial variation in the temperature environment of the high tunnel.

The high tunnel used for this experiment was a pipe-frame gothic style with a single layer of 0.15 mm clear polyethylene plastic including an added infrared blocking material. The dimensions of the east-west structure were 38 m (125 ft) long, 9 m (30 ft) wide and 4.8 m (16 ft) tall. The structure utilized roll-up sidewalls and gable vents during production. Temperature sensors were strategically place in and around the high tunnel (inside at 0.5-m [1.6-ft] height, outdoors at 2.2 m [72 ft] from the tunnel side, and 10 cm [3.9 in] below the surface of the raised beds in the tunnel).

During the summer production period, with vents and sides open, the daytime air temperature exceeded the outside temperature by 10 degrees or more. The beds located near the open side were 2-3 degrees cooler than the bed in the center of the house (4.9 m [16 ft] from the side).

In the winter, larger fluctuations occurred in the air than in the soil temperature. The outside air temperatures, averaged over four days did not exceed -4C (-39F); however, inside the tunnel, temperatures of 5C (41F) were reached. At a depth of 10 cm (3.9 in), the soil temperature inside the tunnel was only 2 degrees higher than outside the tunnel and fluctuated little.

With regard to growth and development of where in the tunnel crops are grown, temperature is only one consideration. The outside rows may have better light exposure, but the plants may need to withstand excess wind or increased insect pressure. Growers can manage the microenvironments by considering species attributes when selecting the growing location within the high tunnel. The key is recognizing that some variation will be present and managing crops accordingly.

Wien, H.C. 2009. Microenvironmental Variations within the High Tunnel. HortScience 44(2) pp. 235-237.

Dissecting the Delphinium Flower to Better Understand Petal Abscission

Delphinium, a popular cut flower, is known to be sensitive to ethylene. The petals (sepals) rapidly abscise, or detach and fall off, when exposed to ethylene. This research project, conducted in Japan, looks at the flower organs, the gynoecium and receptacle, for ethylene activity.

Stems of *Delphinium* 'Bellamosum' were harvested on the day of anthesis. Experiments included the evaluation of ethylene sensitivity, the measurement of endogenous ethylene production, several trials looking at ethylene biosynthesis, and the effect of wounding various flower organs.

This study found that *Delphinium* flowers actually have low sensitivity to ethylene on the day of harvest, requiring more than 3 days after ethylene exposure to result in sepal abscission. One-day-old flowers exposed to ethylene experienced sepal abscission in 0.6 days, while two-day-old flowers were even more sensitive with abscission occurring in 0.1 days. The conclusion was that as the flower ages, the sensitivity to ethylene increases.

By looking at the biosynthesis of the various flower organs, these researchers were able to hypothesize that the gynoecium, which displayed higher ethylene activity, induces ethylene production from the receptacle. While the sepals are not directly connected to the gynoecium, they are connected to the receptacle where ethylene production can result in sepal abscission.

Wounding of the gynoecium, including removal of the surrounding stamens, and wounding of the receptacle accelerated sepal abscission; however, treatment with silver thiosulphate completely suppressed the observed ethylene effect. The authors then concluded that ethylene produced by the gynoecium and receptacle is responsible for sepal abscission in cut delphinium.

Ichimura, K., H. Shimizu-Yumoto, R. Goto. 2009. Ethylene Production by gynoecium and receptacle is associated with sepal abscission in cut Delphinium *flowers. Postharvest Biology and Technology 52 pp. 267-272.*

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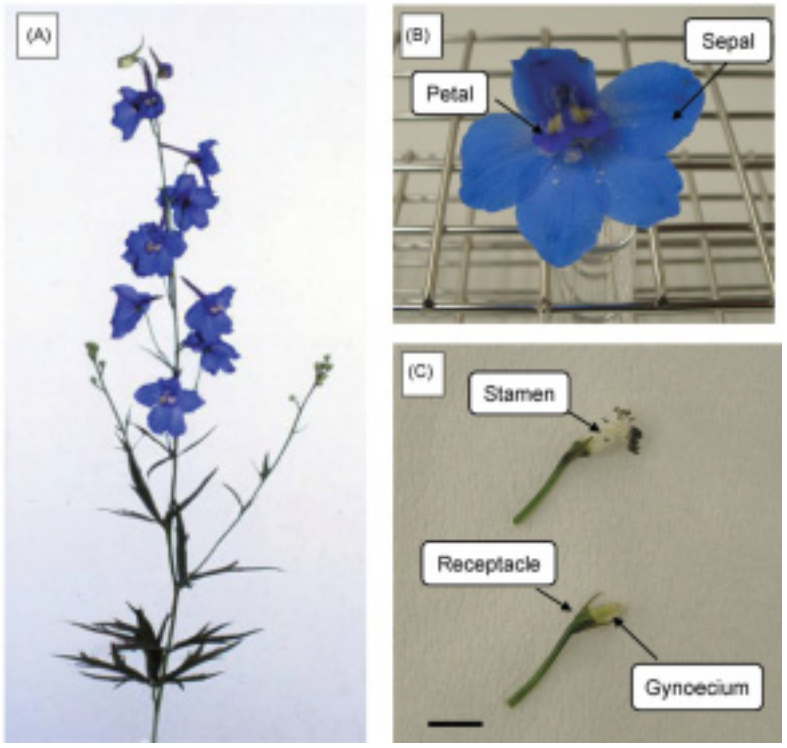

Morphology of *Delphinium* .ower. (A) Morphology of .ower spike. (B) Morphology of .ower with petals and sepals. Stamens cover and obscure the gynoecium. (C) Morphology of gynoecium and receptacle. Bar indicates 10mm.

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GROWER *Profile*

Megan Bame

Joan Thorndike
LeMera Gardens, Rogue River Valley, Oregon

Joan Thorndike has been growing flowers since 1992, when, she says, she came upon it somewhat "by accident." At the time she had two young daughters, ages three and five, whom she wanted to care for while she worked. As she was searching for a revenue stream, the qualifications were 1) to work outside and 2) to be able to take the kids with her to work. She and a friend struck upon an idea to grow flowers on her friend's small piece of land. Though it was less than half an acre, the two faced a steep learning curve as they grew and sold premade bouquets to restaurants and offices.

On the advice of a local businessman they signed no partnership agreement until a full year had elapsed, at which time they realized they were better friends than business partners and they mutually agreed to dissolve their business.

All the while, Le Mera Gardens was an existing business in Ashland, Oregon which presented a "growing" opportunity. Though it had been named for the original owners, Lenny and Merrilyn, they were no longer involved in the farm and Joan considered changing the name. She ultimately decided against it given the existing name recognition. The property consisted of 1 1/3 acres of field area and a hoophouse. For several years the backbone of the farm was the Le Mera recipe for growing sweet Williams for harvest around Mother's Day (In short: sow on July 4, transplant in the heat of August, cover the hoophouse with plastic on Valentine's Day and harvest by Mother's Day).

During the 10 years Joan farmed the Ashland property she added new varieties to offer a more diverse selection to her customers. Her primary sales channel had transitioned from premade bouquets to wholesale bunches for sale primarily to area florists and designers. Though the Rogue River Valley, situated near the border of northern California, has a relatively small population of residents, it is able to support 11 flower shops.

Joan has a unique, informal partnership with another business, Fry Family Farm. For several years, she worked in their greenhouse through the winter, sowing, transplanting and propagating. At the end of March, she could pick out whatever flats she wanted and the two would part ways for the summer. While the Fry family's primary crops are

vegetables and bedding flats sold at four growers' markets, they also grew many varieties of cut flowers. In time, Joan found herself a stop ahead, or a stop behind Suzi Fry as they made their rounds of the supermarkets with cash and carry bouquets.

From the Frying Pan into the Fire

In 2001, Steve Fry approached Joan with an idea. Rather than leaving in March to tend her small acreage, why not just stay, join forces and cut her wholesale bunches from their 10 acres? She would continue to operate as Le Mera Gardens and continue making her florist runs. They would provide field maintenance and supply her with a refrigerated truck to accommodate the increased production. The "new farm" included one propagation house, 8 hoophouses, one shade house and 2 field locations—one in the town of Phoenix and one in West Medford. Until 2009, Joan continued to farm the Ashland field as well with the help of the Fry Family Farm employees.

Joan grows quite a few woody cuts including eucalyptus, snowball viburnum and hydrangea (in a shade house). Her main crops by volume are consistently lisianthus, dahlias, zinnias, veronica, sweet William, phlox, spearmint, ribbon grass and now tuberose. She would like to include delphiniums on that list, but admits that some years the stars seem to align and the delphiniums flourish while other years bring season-long frustrations.

The unpredictable nature of farming doesn't intimidate Joan as it once did. She has come to appreciate that "Farming is an imperfect science." She used to feel inferior when talking with fellow growers who seemed to have perfected one aspect of growing, but now she loves to listen to other farmers recognizing that each person has developed strengths in certain areas and she can learn from their expertise in an area that may be a weakness for her. After nearly 17 years as a flower farmer, Joan has acquired quite a bit of knowledge to share with others as well.

As for formal education, Joan's college degree is in International Studies and Economics. Horticulturally, Joan considers herself, "A product of the ASCFG ," saying, "I learned everything from what the ASCFG has to offer." Joining in 1994, Joan has attended numerous National Conferences and Regional Meetings, and is currently serving on the Board of Directors as Vice-president. Joan admits that while serving on the board may seem a time commitment some might would shy away from, she feels strongly that it is one way to give back to the organization and its members, all the while connecting with and learning from even more fellow growers.

One of her most recent ASCFG-inspired actions was more about marketing than growing; Joan says she was already marketing in person everyday. Last year, she heeded the advice (most notably from a *Quarterly* article by Joe Caputi) to develop a professional quality logo and website. Now, in addition to making personal contacts, the website acts as a silent partner. Joan can update and edit the site as needed since it is a Joomla "site in a box" type designed for ease of use. Joan admits that the website and logo/brand development wasn't cheap, but the work the graphic artist provided can be duplicated on any number of marketing materials including notecards, postcards, advertisements, or even aprons.

Though she works with the goal of selling everything she grows, "at a price that would make John Dole proud," she contributes to her community by giving away lots of flowers—high quality flowers. This effort is two pronged in that it supports the community, but with a business card or copy-ready logo (vertical and horizontal) provided to the recipient organization, the charitable contribution has a marketable touch.

Joan has a love-hate relationship with the phone book's yellow pages. This vital marketing tool accounts for a great majority of her referrals, implying many of her customers are still choosing the phone book over the internet as a resource. For $140 per phone book per year, her listing appears in two extended area phone directories. However, the business publishing the ads has been difficult to work with and this year the Le Mera listing was "inadvertently" omitted from both directories. With growth in web traffic, Joan is hoping the missing ads won't result in missed business opportunities.

While organic agricultural practices were not intentionally a part of Joan's marketing plan, she has always been an organic grower and understands it could be a value-added feature of her product. While she's observed the trend favoring more organic foods, it seems the interest in organic flowers has been limited. From a floral perspective, the "local" and "green" movements seem to be more relevant, especially among bridal parties.

Here Comes the Bride

Twenty percent of sales for Le Mera Gardens are a result of wedding flowers. Joan does not offer any arranging services, she sells straight bunches only. Her approach to weddings has been streamlined over the years so that it now requires only 30 minutes of decision time per bride. She lets folks know that the flower fields are part of a working farm not designed for drop-in visitors. Instead, she schedules half-hour appointments on Tuesday mornings. The bridal party meets her at the refrigerated truck, loaded with whatever is available that week. The bride points to what she wants (no need to know all the flower names), and Joan takes her order. By Thursday evening the order has been harvested, conditioned and is ready

to be picked up at the farm by the bride (or a mom or a friend). The quick turnaround is a huge benefit for Joan and while some brides are nervous about the lateness of the floral arrangements, most are secure in that there will be beautiful flowers available for their special day. Do-it-yourself weddings seem to be cyclical over the years, and if bookings made thus far are any indication, the summer of 2009 promises to be a very good wedding season for this farmer.

The majority of sales for Le Mera Gardens come from weekly florist runs. Joan likens the experience of a florist shopping in her truck to a kid in a candy store. She observes, "What other businesspeople so appreciate the products they receive, week after week, year after year?" One florist has worked the "local" angle to their customers by hanging out a chalkboard sign every spring announcing "Our local organic flowers are in! Welcome back Le Mera Gardens and Fry Family Farm."

The final aspect of Le Mera's sales is wholesale bunches to businesses, restaurants and homes. While this is similar to a subscription service, Joan doesn't require payment in advance. She bills her customers (including the florists) at the end of each month. In terms of flower sales, the beauty of the Fry Family Farm-LeMera Gardens partnership is the diversity and integration of farming enterprise. While Joan is happy to tend to the very specific (some would say picky) needs of her customer base, the Frys take flowers in ready-made bouquets of different sizes and styles to four area growers' markets, adding one more evening market starting in June. The flowers are all grown on the same acreage, same hoophouses, and same shade houses, but the picking style and even the picking crews differ to better serve the particular buying public (shops, weddings, market goers, offices, lodging establishments, restaurants, homes).

Multi-tasking Mothers

Obviously the increased acreage required additional employees and Joan went from being the sole picker for her market share to having to hire up to 3 additional employees (not counting the considerable increase in field workers). Most employees return seasonally, but training is still one of Joan's greatest challenges. Over the years Joan has identified the best employees as women who are over 30 and preferably have children. This isn't because she was once that person, but because those are the workers who are used to thinking of six things at once. She describes the height of the season, under a sweltering sun as, "just shy of chaos."

Joan harvests only the best flowers, working hard to train her employees to understand and appreciate high quality while maintaining an efficient work ethic. She understands that 10 hours of picking gets old, and the speed and selection of quality deteriorates as the workers tire, but she tries to arm them with a knowledge base that will carry them through the longest days. She describes the challenge of dealing with humanity like this, "What I said is not what you heard, listen to me again. What I showed you is not what you saw, watch me demonstrate again." Only when the employee has mastered a task can she work efficiently.

Though not an employee of this family affair, Joan's husband, Dan Thorndike, has been Joan's financial and motivational support over the years. Their daughters, Camila, 21, and Isabella, 19, have both learned a love of flower farming from their mother while working alongside her. The girls are pursuing higher education in the liberal arts, but will carry with them the skills and endurance to grow a beautiful garden and respect hard work. At Whitman College, Camila organizes farmers to actively participate in the legislative process to shape policies that directly affect their farming practices and business successes. Isabella contributes her photography skills by taking pictures of the happenings at Le Mera Gardens. Joan has posted many of these images on the free Picasa host site online. She has made the album public and invites customers and fellow ASCFG members to visit the farm by taking a virtual tour.
http://picasaweb.google.com/
JoanDanFotosLeMeraGardens?feat=email#

Joan has moved past the "dirt under her nails" stage into a management/customer relations position, but along the way she absorbed and applied as much information as she could retain to grow a better, more diverse crop of specialty cuts.

Megan Bame is a freelance writer in Salisbury, North Carolina.
Contact her at meganbame@yahoo.com

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Find the Conference Program on pages 42-45

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BACK to Basics

Ira Silvergleit

Up the Supply Chain

Maybe it's all the time they spend in those nice, warm greenhouses or out in the fields soaking up Vitamin D, but whatever the reason, growers have the sunniest outlook on the economy in the floral industry.

In January, SAF surveyed retail, wholesale and grower members about their current business situations and expectations for the future. The results show that optimism was highest at the top of the supply chain: Growers felt significantly more positive about the state of their businesses than wholesalers and retailers.

Nearly half of wholesalers and retailers (46 percent each) reported that business was "poor" or "terrible." But more than half of growers (58 percent) said business was "OK." Less than a third (29 percent) of growers said business was "poor" or "terrible."

Why the disparity among segments? Chris Drummond, AAF, president and general manager of Plaza Flowers in Philadelphia, said he thinks growers are more optimistic about the economy than other segments because their customer base isn't limited to just wholesalers and retail florists.

"There continues to be a shift in floral purchasing from traditional florists to the mass markets," said the second-generation of directors. "This, of course, will hit the wholesalers and retailers harder than the growers, who may be able to maintain volume by selling to the mass markets."

Herb Van der Ende, a grower at Burnaby Lake Greenhouses, Ltd., in Surrey, British Columbia, said growers are often predisposed to some degree of optimism.

"Growers are, to a large degree, farmers who are always somewhat optimistic," he said. "They have to be, to be planting for harvests that are many months in the future. The customer base for most growers is broader than that of a retail florist or most wholesalers. The timing (of the survey) is also significant, since spring is always typically the growers' best season.

About 13 percent of respondents in each segment of the industry reported business was "good" or "excellent.

Calling All Crystal Balls

Looking ahead at the next six months, many wholesalers (62 percent) predicted the economy would "worsen," compared to just 42 percent of growers and 46 percent of retailers. Drummond suggested that other changes in the industry might account for the relative pessimism of wholesalers.

"Perhaps retailers are buying directly from growers, manufacturers and importers to reduce cost of goods sold," he said. "They may be willing to give up the added service of their local wholesaler to save a few dollars."

Growers were still more optimistic than the rest of the industry about sales prospects over the next six months. About a quarter (26 percent) predicted their sales would improve in the next six months, compared to only 13 percent of wholesalers and 15 percent of retailers. Nevertheless, a higher number of growers, 29 percent, predicted their sales would decline, compared to 38 percent of wholesalers and 39 percent of retailers.

Dottie Pannepacker of Penny's Flowers in Glenside, Pa., said the prospect of continued sales declines has encouraged many retailers to run their businesses more carefully.

"Many of us have sent a message that we will be buying better, using inventory, controlling waste," she said. "Obviously, this will directly affect our wholesalers."

Jeff Lanman, executive director of International Floral Distributors in Richmond, Ind., and chairman of SAF's Business & Economic Trends Committee, pointed out that for many industry members, a slow economy is challenging, but not unprecedented.

"During economic downturns ... successful business leaders create opportunity where competitors could not or would not," Lanham said. "There are generally just a lot less of those opportunities in a recessionary period, but there are always new successes."

For more results, including data about marketing and staffing during a recession, read the spring edition of The Floral Trend Tracker, at www.safnow.org/trendtracker.

Ira Silvergleit is Director, Research and Information, Society of American Florists.

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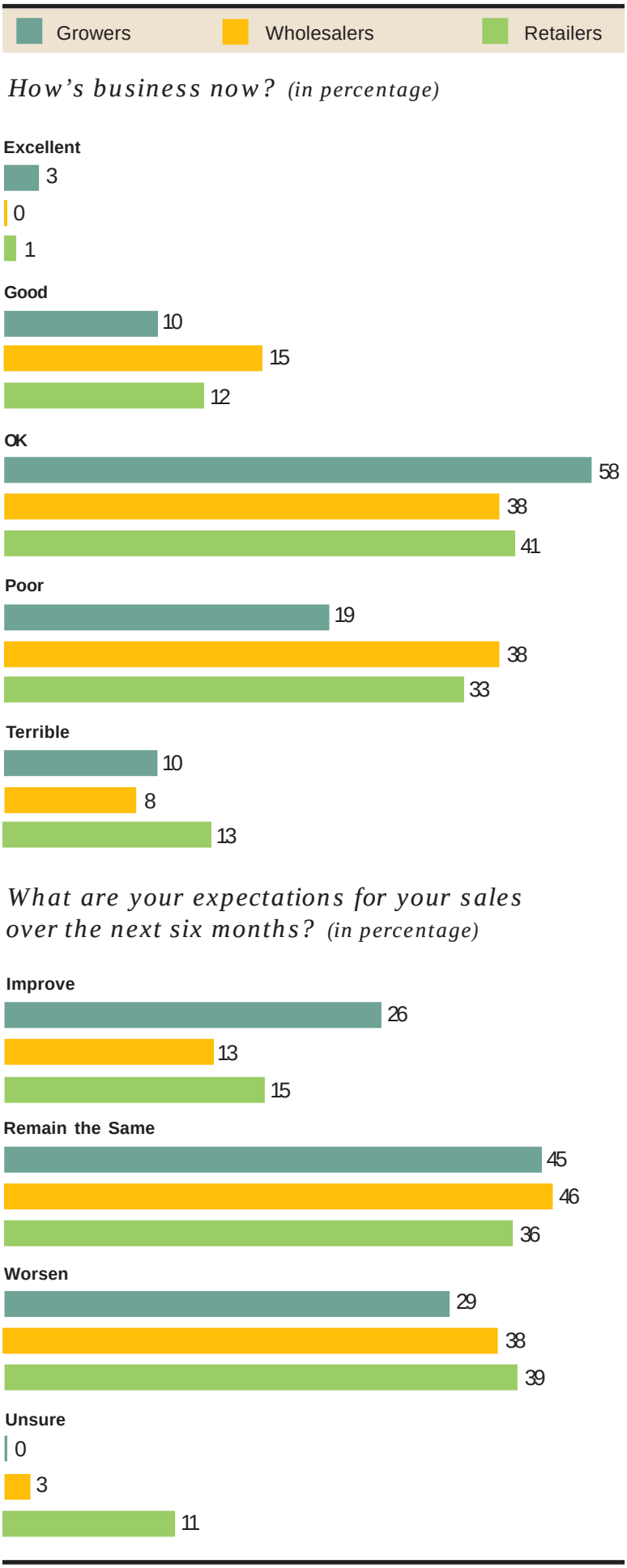
Growers
Wholesalers
Retailers
How's business now? (in percentage)
Excellent
3
0
1
Good
10
15
12
OK
58
38
41
Poor
19
38
33
Terrible
10
8
13
What are your expectations for your sales over the next six months? (in percentage)
Improve
26
13
15
Remain the Same
45
46
36
Worsen
29
38
39
Unsure
0
3
11

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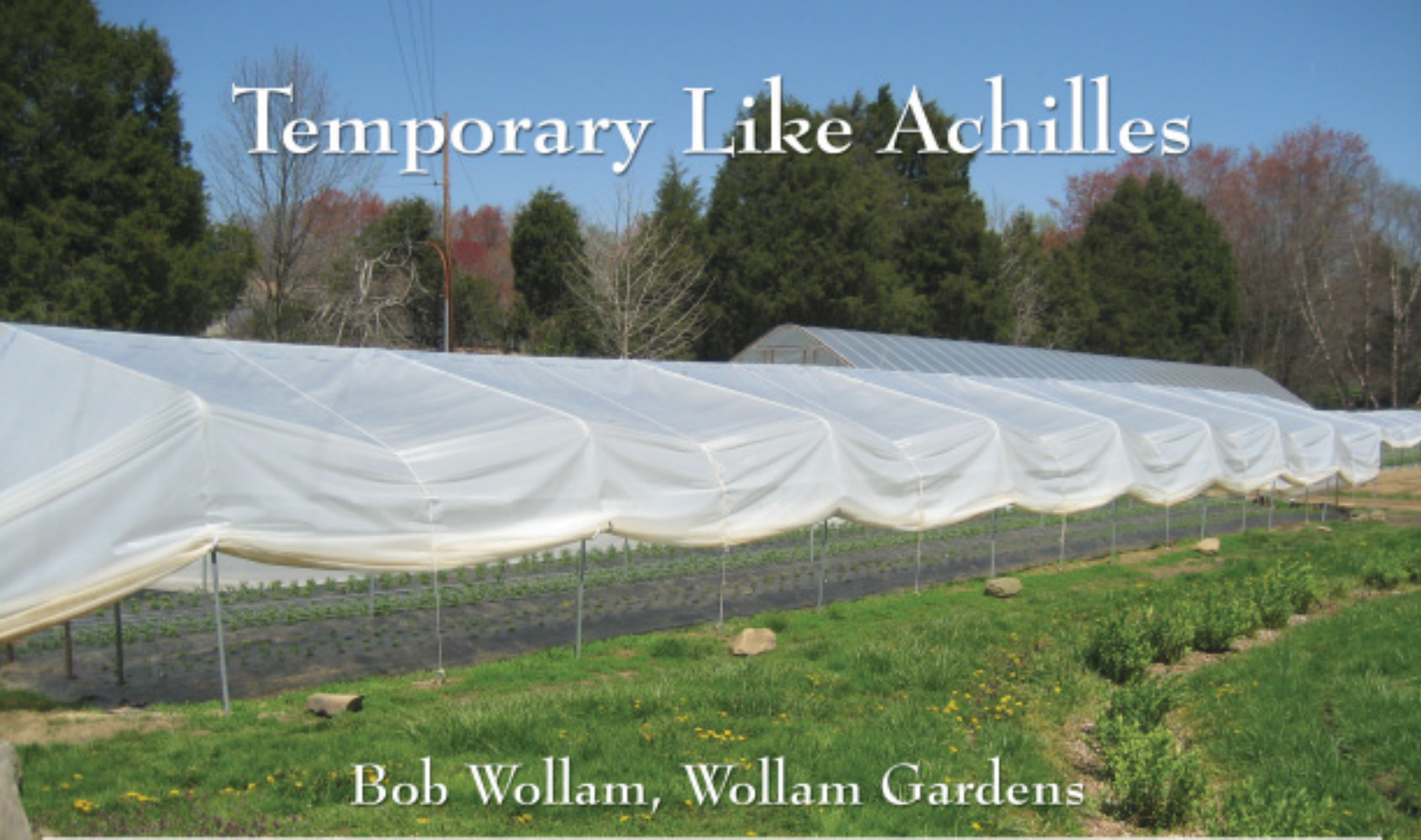

Bob Wollam, Wollam Gardens

I've been growing cut flowers in northern Virginia for almost 20 years. Like everyone, I started small, with one acre of land and 1000 square feet of hoophouse space. As my farmers' market, florist and event sales grew, my appetite for new plants increased and my need for more plant production areas expanded proportionately. As well, I've learned from other ASCFG members about the best plants and methods for extending my season, both earlier in the spring and later in the fall.

At the same time, I've found some of our highest quality flowers come from our hoop-houses. These protective structures not only enhance quality, but in many cases allow us to produce flowers that just can't be grown in the field at our zone 6-7 farm. The list is long and delicious: anemones, ranunculus, stock, snaps, Icelandic poppies, delphinium, sweet peas, campanula, lupine and much more. By last year I had already built 3 permanent cold frames to grow many of these early-season flowers.

In order to accommodate my appetite to grow lots of all those flowers, early this spring I set my indispensable farm manager, Jim Cowan, to work building two types of inexpensive, temporary houses. I insisted they be temporary because I really don't want to look at plastic in my fields all year around.

We started with the assumption that we would cover three raised beds we've been using for a number of years to grow annuals outside. To cover these rather permanent raised beds required the temporary cold frames to span 15 ½ feet, with the length being as long as was manageable. In this case we had in mind covering two three-bed sets of 80 feet, and one 15 ½ foot cold frame of 140 feet. Our beds are remade yearly by tilling in compost with a raised bed implement attached to the tiller, which makes about a 12" high, 40" wide bed. This is covered with landscape fabric which helps retain moisture and prevent weed growth.

Pulling plastic over 80'x15.5' cold frame made from electrical conduit. Note: essential, big, beautiful rocks to hold plastic down in wind.

Drip irrigation is laid under the landscape fabric. We have burned holes in the fabric with most patterns being 4 rows with 9" holes down each row. We have reused the fabric and drip for 3 years and expect it to last many more years. With the fabric barely overlapping between the beds, the entire hoophouse is always clean, and almost weed free, except weeds growing around the planted plugs, which makes for quick cleanup.

The first new temporary house was constructed using electrical conduit which was bent (Jim has strong teeth) to avoid tearing the plastic as the cold frame fights the wind. You will see in the cost evaluation sheet that this cold frame costs slightly more ($12/ running ft.) than the second type of temporary cold frame made from T-posts and 2" PVC pipe ($10/ running ft.).

To cover the cold frames I bought a 200 meter by 10 ½ meter 6 mil. sheet of plastic from Ralph Cramer, the same type he sells to cover the Haygrove tunnels he so successfully grows in. With the one long piece of plastic we could cover the houses with just the right length of material for each cold frame without wasting plastic, which usually comes in only 100 or 150 ft. lengths.

Both structures have worked well, holding up during at least three storms with 50 mph winds. Plants have grown equally well in each. All our crops have been awesome. We planted 30 feet of *Ammi majus*, which has produced huge 7-foot plants. An experiment with a test larkspur produced a beautiful crop with a February seeding and plugs planted in March.

Clearly the objective is to have plugs ready before mid March so they can grow cold through March and April, with huge production from late April through mid June.

We will uncover the houses some time in late June, and store the plastic until the end of September, when it will go back on. We will remove the spring plants and plant our summer crops back into the same holes. Lots of compost helps sustain fertility and we foliar feed with our new compost tea, or with Omega from Peaceful Valley. We'll be planting summer crops: celosia, gomphocarpus, asclepias, ornamental peppers and zinnias—who knows what else we'll think of—when the spring stuff dies back. Recovering in late September will allow for a longer season with really nice flowers.

This system should work anywhere in the country a cold frame is helpful. We will not put them up until March and we'll remove them by Thanksgiving. They won't hold a big snow load, so in March and April, and again in October and November, we may have to run up and down in the cold frames pushing snow off. It didn't happen this spring, but Jim will be ready to work his magic any day or night if necessary.

Planted and netted crops in electrical conduit house. Fourth bed on left is covered by adjacent hoophouse.

Essential joint piece purchased from ShadeKing.com.

Ends of cold frame with gathered plastic tied to T-post.

Side purlin strategically attached to doohickey to hold up plastic when hot.

Hoop Flowers

Temporary Hoop

Sweet Peas
Ammi majus
Icelandic poppies
Larkspur
Lupine
Stock
Delphinium
Campanula
Snapdragons

Permanent Hoop

Ranunculus
Anemones
Over-wintered snaps
Lisianthus
Tulips
Dutch Iris
Icelandic poppies

Pros and Cons

Electric Conduit

Pros

- First two squares need two people
- Very few wear marks

Cons

- Until we remove the intersection conduit holder it is unclear if it will crimp the swagged pipe.
- Eye loop bolt only provides resistance. Carriage bolts could be used but may have to keep pipe in order for the holes to line up.
- Puts a hole in fabric

Pros

- One man operation
- T Post supports one side of flower netting

Cons

- Needs two rolls of duct tape to protect sharp edges
- Removal of tape is a pain
- Lots of pressure on PVC elbows had to replace three, may consider switching to metal (more expensive)

Temporary HH-PVC
15' x 140' Hoop House

• T Post	$5.60 x 34
• PVC 15' 20' Cut Down	$17 x 17
• 14 10'3" Swagged Pipe	$10.95 x 14
• PVC Elbows	$1.50 x 34
• Plastic 165'	$2.72 x 165
• 16" Animal Tie Down	$3.97 x 32
• 3/16"x100 Synt Clo Ln	$6.24 x 3
• 2 Rolls Duct Tape	$12.00 x 2
• 2 T Post	$5.60 x 2
GRAND TOTAL	$1,508.59

1' x 15' = $10.78 per foot

Temporary HH-Electrical Conduit
15' x 80' Hoop House

• 1" Emt Conduit 10'	$5.70 x 35
• Swagged Curtain Pipe	$10.95 x 25
• Shade King Intersectional 1"Emt	$11.00 x 7
• Shade King End Piece	$11.00 x 2
• Cross Connector 1.05"	$2.03 x 18
• Bag Self Tapping Screws	$5.00 x 1
• 3/16x100 Synt Clo Ln	$6.24 x 3
• J-hook 10 Pack	$8.37 x 2
• 16" Animal Tie Down	$3.97 x 16
• T Post	$5.60 x 2
• Plastic 30 x 110	$2.72 x 110
GRAND TOTAL	$1,028.51

1' x 15' = $12.86 per foot

Note: Rocks are necessary and priceless!

As those who know me will attest, I would much rather have you come to the farm and see these cold frames in action rather than answer lots more questions on the Bulletin Board or in emails. I look forward to showing lots of visitors what we've come up with here and look forward to comments on how to improve these cold frames even more.

Thank you to Kim Payne who planted, watered, weeded, cut, and took pictures of these hoophouses.

Contact Bob Wollam at
bob@wollamgardens.com

Left to right: sweet peas, poppies, ammi, larkspur, more poppies.

40'x15.5' PVC and T-post cold frame with campanula, snapdragons, delphinium, and more campanula.

Looking at PVC cold frame from other end. How about that delphinium?

REGIONAL *Reports*

NORTHEAST

Polly Hutchison
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The fireworks begin today. Each diploma is a lighted match. Each one of you is a fuse.

Edward Koch

Graduation Flowers

Last year I had the pleasure of providing bouquets for the Rhode Island School of Design to use as a fundraiser at graduation. They had done this for a few years, but they had never used local flowers before. It worked out really well for me to sell scores of bouquets at the beginning of the season, and they seemed really happy with my flowers. However, when I called back in January or so to confirm a reorder for this year, I was told under the new president a lot had changed and they weren't going to sell flowers at all. Disappointed? I'll say. After a mull of a week or so, I called back and asked "What if I sell them, and donate part of the profits back to the School?" A written proposal and two committee meetings later, the answer was yes.

Once I got in the mood for this idea, I realized the other big private college was Brown University, and why not? Their graduation is a week earlier than RISD, and I figured at worst case I'd get some of the kinks worked out. I didn't have an established connection as I did at RISD, and after 2 months of trying to get through, my alum friends suggested I sell on the street just like the rose-and-baby's-breath crowd. I asked a few recent graduates for tips on location for best sales. I got my Peddler's License (insert joke here). We made a wild stab at how many bouquets to make and drove off at 6:00 a.m. to secure a spot.

The police on detail are your best friends in these situations. I immediately asked them how I could stay out of trouble, and what the protocol was. They also advised me on where to find a parking spot. Sure enough, a van with hundreds of rose bunches rolled out shortly after I had unloaded and parked a few blocks away. Everyone was friendly enough, but one woman I spoke to who sells at dozens of events told me it is pretty cutthroat in general. I think I was just too weird for them to really worry about!

I had small, medium and large bouquets, and retailed at fifteen, twenty-five and forty dollars. The medium-sized sold best, but the large ones were what made people stop. I think the psychology was, "Ooh, that's beautiful! Forty dollars! Well, I don't want to seem too cheap, so I'll take the medium size". Or something like that….

The Brown event went pretty well. I was set up under a tree, and my helper walked into the quad a bit with a bucket of bouquets and sold some that way. My sandwich board signs said "LOCAL FLOWERS – GROWN IN RI" and that did draw quite a few people. I'll do it next year, and bring a wagon like the rose vendors, so we can traipse through the crowds.

The RISD event was quite different. We set up early but the school provided two stands, like big steps, one on the street leading to graduation (no other vendors were allowed in that street) and the other right next to the concession stand inside the event. We started out on the street but since folks were rushing to get seats and then had little to do but mill around, the stand inside the event was the big seller. We did 80% more sales at the RISD event. Of course, a design school is probably much more likely to spring for flowers anyway, so that may be a factor.

Although many of the people are from "away", I was able to promote my farmers' markets to the few faculty or local parents that happened by. The fact that I had actually grown the flowers pretty much blew people's minds. Of course, ranunculus and poppy anemones pretty much blow people's minds anyway! I did buy in some filler and some peonies for the first graduation, but by May 30 I was all set with my own crops.

So, for members in the Northeast Region, where we are rich in local colleges and universities, I can really recommend this as an early-season income source. In my particular case if was wonderful because most of my farmers' markets don't start until June. Some of you in other regions may be able to jump on this flower wagon as well. I will be working this fall on how to package more effectively, how to have enough help that is strategically placed, and how to improve signage.

Come to the Conference

Look, I know it's a squeaky-tight year, but this year's conference in Long Island, New York is going to be great. We have excellent advice from serious growers and other professionals on important crops like peonies, sunflowers, and bulbs. We have a workshop on organics from half of a serious, go-getter team of farmers up in the competitive Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts. And we have an all-new track on events with phenomenal Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI, who not only knows the business inside and out, but is just great! The grower-designer perspective will be filled out by a number of excellent fellow members who are doing it already.

I plan to learn a lot at this conference. I also plan to make more money based on what I learn here, as I have done every other year I have come. Would you like to make more money? See you in Long Island!

MID-ATLANTIC

Andrea Gagnon
LynnVale Studios
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Everything here at Lynnvale Farm is lush and green, too green. Zinnias, dahlias and lisianthus continue to enjoy copious amounts of irrigation from record rainfall, yet the lower temperatures, threats of frost and lack of sunshine have delayed our production significantly. Early June has always been a particularly challenging month for us, dependent largely on the success of our fall-seeded crops: larkspur, bupleurum, bachelor buttons, etc. This year most of these have been disappointing for various reasons. So we find ourselves with more markets than ever and less product than ever. A grower's conundrum and we've taken juggling our successful crops to a new level.

Naturally, peonies are a mainstay for May production, however, with a little hustle we plan to market them through June. We grow 'Festiva Maxima', 'Mon Jules Eli' and some unnamed bright and dark pinks. Successful at market, with our retail florists, and show-stopping for events, we recognize that there is little way our limited production can meet the insatiable demand. Since most of our markets are "producer only" it's easy to fall prey to the seasonal mantra "we sell only what we grow". So, before our first stems are ready for harvest we are buying peonies from a local mail-order nursery (growing them primarily for tuber sales in the fall) and are re-selling 'Red Charm' and 'Coral Charms', among others, to our retail florists. We are also using them for our events, squirreling away exotic Japanese types and many others even while our first stems are coming in. Keeping track of what's ours and can be sold at our markets, and what's purchased can be challenging.

This year we wrapped the heads of our peony bunches in white freezer paper and labeled each with date, variety, source and event information, if necessary. The wrapped bunches are stored dry in boxes in our cooler and are easy to grab and go for market and/or deliveries. The freezer paper stands up to any unwelcome moisture in our market-bound ice chests and the labeling keeps us straight.

As I write we have only 15 bunches of our own peonies left, with 300 or so locally-sourced peonies awaiting events and florists, and we expect a delivery any day of beautiful 'Red Charms' from Third Branch Flower Farm of Vermont. More so than early peonies, the demand is even higher for these beauties in late June and early July. By keeping peonies on our availabilty list for as long as possible we've been able to keep our customers happy and more than just our fields filled with green.

In closing, thanks to all attendees, speakers and sponsors of the Mid-Atlantic Regional meeting at our farm this past April. I look forward to seeing you all at our National Conference in November. Good luck this season.

SOUTHEAST

Susan Wright
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Wow. It's turning out to be a good season so far. Shoppers at the farmers' market are snapping up lilac and baptisia like they're food. Vegetable transplants are going for premium prices, and I have high hopes for the big peony crop just now coming in. Most of the South has had rain and more rain. We also had a very late frost, leaving us with bitten fingernails and sore backs from watering and covering lots of perennials. We were lucky—or slow—though we didn't have our annuals out yet, like most of the southern farmers.

The down economy has blessed us with very good helpers for the first time in many years. And for better or worse, brides are calling us for flowers because they perceive "regular" florists as too expense. Last fall before the big downturn I decided to raise a few prices. We have stuck to them, with no complaint. I'm now sure it was the right thing to do. Fuel, labor and materials cost were very high last summer: something had to give.

We're working on a grant from ASCFG this summer. We purchased the plants last summer but they were too small to plant in our pasture-grass infested field. We are working with several perennials using the timing of pinching to slightly delay the bloom time, or spread it out over a longer harvest period. I'd love to hear from anyone already doing this. We are using phlox 'David', phlox 'Blue Paradise', a pink, late, unnamed, disease-resistant garden phlox, heleniums 'Red Shades', 'Mardi Gras', 'Coppelia', and 'Kanaria'. We killed Helenium 'Tiny Dancer' already.

See you at the Conference. I'm really looking forward to the session on weddings. Check out my very short blog or photos on flickr.com or drop me a line wwwshady-grove-garden.blogspot.com

MIDWEST

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Ok, so now you have your crops in and are starting to harvest. The next big question is "What is the best way to get the crop to market?" As most of you growers have done, we also started delivering with the car….THE CAR! And at the time we were thankful for that. We then graduated to the Van, and in our case, the Suburban. Driving with the air conditioner going at full blast could get to be a chilling experience. And by the end of a hot summer day, the cooling ability of the air conditioner was less than acceptable. After a lot of research, Bulletin Board reading and Ebay shopping, we took the leap and bought a Sprinter with a cooling unit. It was a used unit with 200,000 plus miles on it, but we bought it for about the third of the price of a new unit set up the same way. We spent the first summer doing some troubleshooting and repairs. The cooler had some problems that took a toll on our love of the Sprinter, but it turned out to be a simple thing like replacing the filter. The Sprinter mechanical was a bit more expensive, but was mainly sensors on the motor and drive train that needed to be replaced.

The pluses that we have enjoyed with the Sprinter over a regular van are numerous. First of all, it drives and rides like a Caddy…well, not quite! It is susceptible to high winds, especially if empty. The mileage is great, for a big unit. It gets better mileage than the Suburban by a long shot! The cooler will hold the temperatures near ideal for transporting the flowers. And I love the ability to stand up straight while in the back.

It also allows florists to enter the unit and shop right from the buckets. I built a set of stairs for the back out of some scrap aluminum so that access is easy for some of the older ladies who have bad knees like mine. I installed some extra lighting for better visibility so the doors can be kept closed while shopping. Then I added some framing to hold the flower containers upright and some racks on the walls to hold smaller containers. For the farmers' market, I made allowances for space to haul two tents, 4 ½ tables, two folding chairs and the weights. My weight are quite the conversations pieces. I found 6 old house screw jacks that weigh about 45 pounds each.

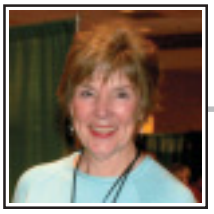
If you are shopping for a Sprinter, I have a few suggestions. Make sure that you have a reputable service shop within reasonable distance from your home base for both the cooler and the truck. I have to drive about an hour to get to a dealership, which is fine as long as you don't have to be towed. Don't be too concerned with high mileage. Sprinters are built for high mileage. I have heard up to 600,000. Of course, there is going to be some upkeep and some of those things can be expensive. If you are buying a used unit, be aware of the insulation. I 'reinsulated' our unit with an extra layer of polystyrene and 'sealed' the doors with foam insulation so that very little of the metal is exposed to the inside of the unit.

Before you purchase, especially if you are not mechanical, have the unit inspected by an independent mechanic! And if possible, get some kind of warrantee/guarantee on the cooler unit or buy it cheap enough to do repairs. A new cooler unit can run $8-10 m. Plan on putting on new tires! Peace of mind and safety are important. If I were to do it again, I would immediately replace all of the belts, filters and (depending on the mileage) those pesky sensors. Become very familiar with the unit! Learn the controls for the vehicle and the cooler system. Know the troubleshooting items before you begin using the unit because while you are driving is not a good time to do research!

Each grower has different needs and the Sprinter may not be the answer for your operation but I hope this information will help you make a decision. I would have loved to have a new unit—and there are some really good new units available—but one has to weigh the costs against the possible revenue that it can generate.

I continue to make modifications to the hauling system as time and experience educate me.

Many of the suggestions that I have made would apply to any vehicle that you would buy. One of the most important is, "Will it do the job that you need done?" Good luck with your delivery system! Happy gardening.



SOUTH-CENTRAL

Josie Crowson
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This time of year gets crazy for flower growers. Not only are we harvesting, marketing, weeding, watering, fertilizing, delivering flowers, making bouquets, working farmers' markets, but still planting new crops. One day last week, as I stood on my processing porch preparing a rush order for delivery, intermittently giving directions to my part-time student helpers, a florist arrived. I had completely forgotten that she was coming to pick up an order. We took care of her, but I began to wonder how many other things I'm forgetting.

I live in perpetual fear of ruining someone's party by forgetting to deliver their flowers. Now, I admit some of this may be age-related, but I suspect that for all of us, whatever our age, keeping organized and managing our time is especially challenging during these peak-season months. And keeping track of things is even more difficult for us flower growers because requests and orders can come at any time. Farmers' market customers stop by to say "I need flowers for a party next Wednesday," or a florist calls while you are in the field. How can we manage our busiest times without going crazy?

Many years ago, before I lived in flower world, my direct supervisor was an executive VP at a Freddie Mac (yes, *that* Freddie Mac, but before it started doing stupid things.) Paul was the most organized person I ever met, but also an easygoing, laid-back sort of guy. He spent 30 minutes every morning reviewing his long-term goals and his plans for the day, week and month. Although he was quite a busy person, Paul's desk was always clean, and his mind always seemed clear. My boss tried diligently to teach his staff better organization. He took us to a Stephen Covey seminar, got us discounts on his books, and conducted an informal course on time-management. For me, this stuff really helped. I started using a planner, set goals, managed my time better, and kept my desk clean. But that was a long time ago, and there's been a lot of backsliding since then.

Looking at my cluttered desk and kitchen table, and realizing that things seem a bit out of control, I decided to get better organized. My first step was to buy *The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done Without Driving Yourself Crazy* by Pamela Dodd and Doug Sundheim. This is a quick read, doesn't contain any earth-shattering revelations, but has some useful tips and tidbits. Some of these won't be new to you, but a little review can't hurt:

- Use a personal planning system—either paper or a PDA—and keep all your tasks here, not on stickies or stray pieces of paper.

- Write down your goals. Make them SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound).

- Plan backward. Pick a goal, list the milestones to achieve the goal by the deadline, set dates for each milestone, starting with the deadline and working backward. Then list the actions required to complete each milestone. Your plan transforms your "busyness" into focused productivity.

- Make "to do" lists and prioritize them. Rank each item as A (high priority), B (medium priority) or C (low priority), and then group them by letter or color-code them. Each day, make sure you complete your As, and then go to Bs and Cs as you can. If a task can be completed in 3 minutes or less, do it now.

- Schedule unpleasant tasks early in the day.

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• Discover your peak time of day and do your most important work then, when you have the most energy and think most clearly. Of course, flower growers have little choice in the summer—we have to get lots done in the mornings.

• Get a good filing system. Most of use only 20 percent of the papers we file and spend at least 75 hours a year looking for lost papers. A few years ago, I bought a good system (The Paper Tiger), but you can develop a similar system yourself. The trick is to *number* your files and file them by number instead of alphabetically. Create a database that lists each file by number, name and keywords. You can create database categories too—business, family, finances, etc. Then when you need a file, go to your database and search on your keywords. It makes files so much easier to find!

• Set up tickler files to keep track of items needing further action. Label twelve 1/3-cut file folders January through December. Label thirty-one 1/3 cut file folders 1 through 31 (for the days in any month). Put the monthly folders in a hanging file nearby. Behind them put the daily folders. At the beginning of each month, take out that month's file and put all its items in the appropriate daily files. When new items needing attention come along (by mail, email or phone), put a large note (not a sticky note) in the appropriate folder (day or month). Each night, take out the next day's folder. The next day, handle all the items in that folder. This actually works, but only if you use it. I admit to being a slacker.

• Do one thing at a time. Multitasking actually reduces productivity, because it means moving quickly back and forth between tasks, so that none get our full attention. Of course, our work often involves brief connections—at the farmers' market, for example, or interrupting one task to direct workers on another. The experts advise concentrating fully on each one (spotlighting), even if it is just for a short time. Give each task your undivided attention.

• Don't obey your every thought. It's so easy to get sidetracked in the field. You're harvesting, notice weeds and so start weeding. The better approach is to just write yourself a reminder about the weeding, and keep on harvesting.

• If you are really having trouble with organization or time management, you can get help from a professional organizer. Did you know there is actually a National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO)? Check them out at www.Napo.net.

According to Dodd and Sundheim, "People who manage their time well get more done, feel less stress, have better relationships, feel better about themselves and their lives, and have ample time to do the things they like to do"—like attending the 2009 ASCFG National Conference in Hauppauge, New York this October.

WEST

Brenda Smith
Smith & Smith Farms
smithsmithfarms@aol.com

Exciting times in the West! This is one column that I get to report on all the big happenings in our region and don't have to work my brain over for an idea that someone might read! Let's start off with an introduction and great big western howdy to Christof Bernau who has agreed to run (and take over the reins) as the next West Regional Director. Christof has so much to offer the Association; for those of you who attended the ASCFG Conference in San Jose you will remember Christof as one of our tour guides at the UC Santa Cruz farm.

Of course, Christof is much more than a tour guide; he is the garden manager for the UC Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, and a long-time member of ASCFG. The apprentices who go through the program all learn about growing flowers from Christof. The West region is really going to get hopping with Christof in the center of the California flower world. I can hardly wait for you all to get to know him. Being of the mindset that we need more growers growing, it was gratifying to me that Christof attended the West Regional Meeting with 3 apprentices from the program. So, welcome Christof.

Goldsmith opened its doors to West Regional Meeting attendees.

What I hope will become an annual gathering in the West was held on a glorious, sunny California April 3rd. What a great, great group we had from all regions, and we ended up with a meeting of 30 folks (thank you all for making my day). We dined California style the evening before and had a great round table discussion of all kinds of things flower related, and we helped Vicki Stamback brainstorm for ideas for the 2010 Conference to be held in Tulsa. The ASCFG Board had been discussing how to tweak the format a bit for the Conference, and Tulsa 2010 is going to be a 'must attend' event. I think Vicki got a lot of good input from the group.

Even the garbage at Goldsmith is colorful!

We started out on Friday touring the California Spring Trials. I said this last year and I will say it again: until you go to the Spring trials and experience the hospitality that Sakata, Takii and Goldsmith extend to ASCFG members you will not believe it. Plus, the amount of flowers is visual gluttony. There are so many flowers it keeps your head spinning into the next week with possibilities. I have included a picture of the garbage/compost bin at Goldsmith. Why? Even the garbage at Goldsmith is colorful. It seems I can never appropriately express my gratitude to our hosts, Kathy Cron at Sakata, Bonnie Marquardt at Takii and Jeannine Bogard at Goldsmith—these three women are awesome! They assure us that we are welcome next year, so I hope you can attend.

Finally, I wanted to tell you of a seminar that I put on jointly with Vicki Stamback in Nevada at the end of April. This was a 2-day workshop for people interested in growing cut flowers. This program was funded through a USDA specialty crop grant to Western Nevada College. They have a series of workshops throughout the year, on things like growing wine grapes, composting, and ours on cut flowers. We had no idea what to expect but this program turned out wonderfully. Lots of enthusiasm for the topic. About 25 folks signed up, the president of the college attended (that was good). I know I have said it before (repeating myself could be a clue it is time for a new Regional Director) but really, these are exciting times for being a flower grower. I know I am so encouraged, we have been the only flower grower for hundreds of miles in Nevada for over 10 years, and now we have 25 people showing up and paying for a workshop on cut flowers. Wow!

I hope you are relishing your role as a flower grower and the way you can brighten days for people every day. Good growing to you and hope to see you soon. I do have a quote this month that I think is worthy of the Quarterly:

"We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us."
– Marcel Proust.

NORTHWEST

Jeriann Sabin
Bindweed Farm
jasabinart@aol.com

Here's the irony: we grow between 20,000 and 30,000 tulips every year, and if I had a dollar for every time someone asked me if I'd ever been to Skagit Valley's tulip festival I wouldn't have to plant another tulip! Well, perhaps that's a slight exaggeration—but it's hard not to exaggerate when talking about this magical valley. I spent only a few days in Mount Vernon while attending our 2009 Regional Meeting but find myself starry eyed and waxing poetic as I try to relate the experience, so bear with me.

Diane Szukovathy and Dennis Westphall are the wizards creating a paradise they call Jello Mold Farm, the site of our meeting. Part field, part orchard, with a barn, house and pottery studio, their seven acres are an explosion of creative energy. A sense of play is evidenced in every corner—a swing begging for action in the middle of a pathway, a fountain of antique taps, faucets, bed pans, urinals and few odd taxidermy forms, a sunken fire pit complete with medieval-like sculpted seating and a boulder mosaic border, and jello molds, lovingly collected and tacked on everything. Their turn of the century home, like everything else on the farm, is a work-in-progress filled with quirky antiques and custom made art pieces, fantastic stained glass and jello molds.

And then there is the barn, brand new, two stories, with a processing room to die for. It has a concrete floor, great natural light, big work table, loads of shelves and a wall of deep sinks backed by marble tile—all salvaged material, except the overhead hot water spray arm. (As I bend over the fortieth bucket this morning, up to my ankles in icy hose water I am so envious.)

On the day of our meeting this space was converted into a laboratory complete with microscopes so we could explore the contents of the compost tea brewing in the corner. Alison Kutz-Troutman of Sound Horticulture demonstrated the entire process and clarified the contents and benefits of using compost tea. The second floor of the barn was the perfect setting for our meeting. Sitting deep in our turquoise theatre seats, surrounded by windows and breathtaking views, we met one another over coffee and juice. After a warm welcome from our hosts, Vivian Larson of Everyday Flowers and Osborne Seeds started the

Diane Szukovathy, Jello Mold Farm, Mount Vernon, Washington

Vivian Larson, Everday Flowers, Stanwood, Washington

Lane Greer, Portland, Oregon

morning session with a very informative talk about starting seeds. Her knowledge complements her passion for germination and all benefited from her depth of experience.

Lane Greer, co-author of *Woody Cut Stems for Growers and Florist Production* was up next. She explained a bit about gathering the information for her book and started the presentation with some postharvest conditioning information. Ten days prior Diane had harvested four samples of sixteen woodies from the farm to set up a small postharvest trial. She put a sample of each cut stem in clean water and left it un-refrigerated, another sample was placed in clean water and refrigerated for seven days, the remaining samples were placed in water conditioned with two different brands of commercial holding solution, one at room temperature and the other refrigerated for a week. The un-refrigerated cuts fared the worst, some were even totally dried up and spent. The refrigerated but unconditioned cuts performed better but the results were mixed, an article in itself. Because woody stems are such a huge topic Lane asked the audience what they were most interested in and we moved outside, stopping to discuss each woody variety and answering questions.

The hoophouse is at the back of the farm and so made a natural transition from Lane's presentation to Diane's. Jello Mold Farm was awarded an ASCFG Grower Grant to test the viability of heating a hoophouse with compost. Diane began her talk as she forked into the most beautiful compost I have ever seen. Their low-tech hydronic compost heating system started with 250 feet of hot water hose looped into and through three yards of compost. The thermometer resting in the surface of the pile was registering 165 degrees! A few minutes after firing up the circulating system we could feel the heat of the water, the compost transferred enough to heat the water to 105 degrees. From the circulation tank the heated water flowed in hoses over raised beds of ranunculus, sweet peas and anemones. Diane will be writing a full report to be published in a future *Quarterly* after a little tweaking and information gathering.

We enjoyed one another's company as we lunched together on the deck outside the loft and on straw bales set up under the shade of blooming trees. Folks spent time wandering the farm and outbuildings, reacquainting and meeting new people, checking out the microscopes and compost tea brewer and trying the swing. Then we caravanned to Choice Bulb Farms, driving through the heart of Tulip Town amidst acres of color—wow! Our host, Jan Roozen, a seventh-generation Dutch bulb grower, has "green" in his DNA and very generously shared his knowledge as we toured his farm and processing barn.

We ended our afternoon back at Jello Mold Farm with an informal network session—you know, hanging out with other farmers swapping stories and invaluable information about sources, compost, new varieties and crazy clients encountered at farmers' markets and lining up for autographed copies of Lane's book.

During quiet moments throughout the day I scanned faces trying to match names and locations—we had folks from Canada, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. (As a matter of fact, every ASCFG farm in Idaho except one was in attendance. Granted there are only three farms, but Go Idaho!) I want to extend a huge thank you to our sponsors, speakers, participants, volunteer helpers and our hosts at Jello Mold Farm and especially to Diane for countless hours spent planning, organizing, advertising and preparing her home and farm for this meeting.

Diane has accurate notes and information gathered from her woodies postharvest trial and is happy to share. If you are interested please contact her via email at diane@jellomoldfarm.com

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ASCFG News

The ASCFG Welcomes its Newest Members

Dorothy Borland, The Garden at Elawa Farm, Lake Forest, IL
Kathy Bressler, Fish Creek Peonies, Wilson, WY
Irene Constantinidis, The Garden at Elawa Farm, Lake Forest, IL
Leslie Dawley, Burnside Farms, Haymarket, VA
Jennifer Deking, Fir Island Flowers, Mount Vernon, WA
Peggy Duvall, Twisted Oak Flower Farm, White Post, VA
Amy Hinkle, Belle Center, OH
Elizabeth Jackson, Gerlach, NV
James Kelly, Emerald Farm, Glen Cove, NY
Anita Knight, Johnson Greenhouses, Duncanville, AL
Sandy Larson, Fir Island Flowers, Mount Vernon, WA
Jennie Love, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA
Mary MacDonald, Beautiful Food Farm, Silver City, NV
Lisa McDonald, Snow Country Flowers, McCall, ID
Marina Merrick, Local Color Flowers, Baltimore, MD
Skip Paul, Wishing Stone Farm, Little Compton, RI
Janice Spalty, New Millenium Alpaca Farm, Lancaster, NH
John Yates, Gold Peak Gardens, Tillamook, OR

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An ASCFG Regional Meeting

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South-Central
July 6, 2009
Nacogdoches, Texas

Midwest
The Midwest Meeting has been cancelled.

Thank you ASCFG Research Foundation Supporters!

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Ron Chaskelson
Therese Collins
Leah Cook
Simon Crawford
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Janet Foss
Matt Gerald
Bryan Gjevre
& Harold Wilkins
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Amy Hicks
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Bev Schaeffer
Kate Sparks
Cathy Sutcliffe
Joan Thorndike
Chris Wien
Bob Wollam
Johnathan Yu

Congratulations to Members

Celebrating Ten Years with the ASCFG!

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Gary & Sybil Calder

Linda Chapman

Diana Doll

Dave Dowling

Karen Hanley

Dale Heinzman

Sue Ellen Hendricks

Laurie Hodges

Red & Steve Kennicott

Jana Lamboy

John McKeown

Jane Merdan

John Prouty

Brenda Smith

Kate Sparks

Ralph Thurston

Heather Warren

Kathy York

Johnathan Yu

Picture Unavailable: Deborah Barber, Ann Boutreis, Connie Dam-Byl, Dale Deppe, Mike Emers, Patricia Latham, Audrey Norberg

SELLING LOCALLY?

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A★S★C★F★G Elections

Vice-president

Linda Chapman, Harvest Moom Farm, Spencer, Indiana

My talented partner Deryl Dale and I have been creating a small, productive and diverse farm for the past 22 years. We sustainably grow and harvest flowers, culinary herbs, specialty food crops, micro-greens and other agricultural experiments. I have been an ASCFG member for the last ten years. After attending my first ASCFG National Conference, my farming methods were revolutionized. I've become a better flower farmer from all the information I've received these past 10 years, and I am grateful!

I had the opportunity to speak at the Austin Conference; since then, I've been learning all I can from this organization. I have spent the last number of years 'giving' to my local agricultural community. I worked toward the creation of an indoor winter farmers' market, now moving into its sixth year. I've had the fun of working with local organizations to start a Homegrown Indiana Farm Tour and Dinner series for our market customers. I've also served on several market and agricultural boards and am currently a farmer partner in a 2-year intensive research project on hoophouse production with Purdue University.

Besides my love for growing flowers and enhancing them with artful intentions, all this really means is that I LOVE working with farmers and folks involved with agriculture. Lately, I've been 'clearing the boards' a bit locally and am ready and wanting to 'give back' to the ASCFG. I would be honored to receive your vote.

Leah Cook, Wild Hare Farm, Cedar Grove, North Carolina

Leah has been an ASCFG member for 11 years. She and Mark Thomas grow vegetables, strawberries and of course lots of specialty cut flowers. The majority of crops are sold at the Carrboro Farmer's Market. Additional sales occur at area restaurants, florists and grocery stores. Leah was Southeast Regional Director from 2005 to 2007. She co-hosted the 2007 National Conference in Raleigh with John Dole. Leah taught sustainable cut flower production at Central Carolina Community College for six years and has given many talks around the Southeast. She is currently serving as president of the Carroboro Farmer's market. Leah credits the success of her flower growing business to the ASCFG. "The ASCFG is a fantastic organization, unlike any other. Growers are so generous with their experience and information and I would be honored to serve as vice president. It is important for me to give back to such a worthwhile organization".

Joan Thorndike, Le Mera Gardens, Ashland, Oregon

Joan has been a member of the ASCFG family since 1994. To this day she is fully aware that she could never have grown a cut flower business without the ASCFG and all of its offerings. From its many publications (much loved and now tattered), to National Conferences, Regional Meetings, the Bulletin Board, support from the Oberlin Office Women, sharing with fellow growers, educational opportunities, and a myriad of surprise encounters, the ASCFG is this flower grower's farming and business backbone.

Joan has served on the ASCFG's Board of Directors for the past two years as its Vice-president, making sure the President shows up for duty. She would be honored to serve for another two-year term.

West Regional Director

Christof Bernau, University of California, Santa Cruz, Center for Agroecology

Christof Bernau is a gardener and teacher in the Apprenticeship Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. He works with students from around the country and the world to build their capacity to grow food and flower crops and feed their communities. A love of ecology, teaching, growing and eating keeps him motivated for the garden rain or shine. "I am excited to join the board of ASCFG, and to work together to expand our educational outreach, help members/growers meet ever changing production challenges, find new crops to grow for market and to bring new information and exposure back to my students."

Northwest Regional Director

Bernadette Hammelman, Hammelmans Dried Floral, Mt. Angel, Oregon

I have been part of Hammelman Farms with my husband Dan since 1987, with about 750 acres of vegetables, wheat and grass seed. Flower production began in 1989, about 5 acres for the dried floral market. Now celebrating our 20th year of floral production, with about 50 acres mostly for the dried & preserved industry, and some fresh flowers. I served on the ASCFG Board as Vice-president 2000-2001 and have been a member since 1994, most recently serving on the Portland Conference Committee with some creative and devoted members.

The ASCFG is such a unique group, as we all know. I have made so many *invaluable* connections, both for my business as well as personally. I understand the value of this organization and would like to bring my experience in service to he board. I believe there is more than one candidate for this position, not something that happens often enough. I firmly believe we are stronger when we have options to choose from. I know our region will be well served by whomever ever is chosen. Thanks so much for the opportunity to serve!

Diane Szukovathy, Jello Mold Farm, Mount Vernon, Washington

Diane owns and runs Jello Mold Farm with her husband Dennis. They grow a wide variety of premium quality annuals, perennials, grasses and woody cuts which are marketed to Seattle area florists and retailers. They use ecologically sound growing practices and market locally. Farm operations include a rigorous hot composting program for which Diane received a 2008 ASCFG Grower Grant to explore possibilities for using compost heat to benefit winter crops in the hoophouse. They hosted the Northwest Regional Meeting this spring.

"Four acres and four years... we're starting to make a living doing what we want and BIG credit goes to the ASCFG, an organization committed at the core to education, sharing and helping its members be successful. I am deeply inspired by and grateful to the spirit of the ASCFG and would be honored to serve as Northwest Regional Director. Last year we were asked to respond to a survey question: How do we see the next 25 years of the ASCFG? I see domestic/local flower production grabbing a larger share of the market and I see the ASCFG being key in providing the education and networking opportunities necessary to make that change."

Cut Flower Field Day
Let's Make More Money in 2009
July 27, 2009
8:00 A.M. to 4:45 P.M.

Tour Sites: Plantmasters, Laytonsville, Maryland and Farmhouse Flowers and Plants, Brookeville, Maryland
Sponsored By: University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
In Cooperation With: The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, the Maryland Greenhouse Growers Association and the Maryland Cut Flower Growers Association

Meet at First Site:	**Plantmasters, 22617 Griffith Drive, Laytonsville, MD 20882**
8:00 – 8:30 A.M.	**Registration/Check-in at Plantmasters**
8:30 – 10:00	**Plantmasters** Leon and Carol Carrier produce cut stems from perennials, annuals, and woody plants on their property and most of their very cooperative neighbors. You can come away truly inspired on ideas for cut stems and how to arrange them to maximize your profit. Speakers/Hosts: Carol and Leon Carrier, Owners
10:00 – 11:00	Creating Great Compost and Compost Teas for Cut Flower Operations Speakers: Benny Erez, University of Maryland and Pogo Sherwood, Pogo's Organics
11:00 – 11:15	Marketing Edible Cut Flowers Speaker: Ginny Rosenkranz, Extension Educator, Wicomico County, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
11:30 -12:30	**Go to Park for LUNCH (Provided)** Unity Neighborhood Park, 3724 Damascus Road, Damascus, MD 20882
12:30 – 1:15	**During Lunch** - What's New for Cut Flowers from Gloeckner Seed Company Speaker: David Seitz, Gloeckner Seed Company, New York

Go to Afternoon Site: Farmhouse Flowers and Plants, 4501 Gregg Road, Brookeville, MD 20833
Owned by Dave Dowling, Farmhouse Flowers & Plants has grown from a small cutting garden in the spring of 1994 to close to three acres of annual and perennial plants and woody shrubs for cutting. Farmhouse Flowers & Plants grows over 75 different varieties of annual and perennial flowers for cutting and herb plants for local florists, farmers markets and home gardens. With over 9,800 square feet of growing area in seven heated greenhouses, they are able to grow cut flowers year round.

People are encouraged to bring samples to discuss during these sessions:

1:30– 1:50	Disease Management in Cut Flowers Speaker: Karen Rane, Director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
1:50 – 2:10	Insect and Mite Management in Cut Flowers Speaker: Stanton Gill, Extension Specialist, CMREC, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
2:10 – 2:30	Weed Control Advances Speaker: Chuck Schuster, Extension Educator, Montgomery County office, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
2:30– 4:45	Farmhouse Flowers and Plants: Tour of High Tunnel and Field Production and Discussion of Growing Techniques Speaker/Host: Dave Dowling, Farmhouse Flowers and Plants

If you have problems finding the sites on the day of the program only (July 27th), call 410-868-9400.

For registration information, go to www.ascfg.org

Haygrove's Annual Tour

Since the introduction of Haygrove tunnels, the tunneled acreage in America has been increasing rapidly. Because British growers have been "tunneling" for years, American growers can take advantage of their experience by joining Haygrove's annual tour of British tunnels, September 27-30, 2009.

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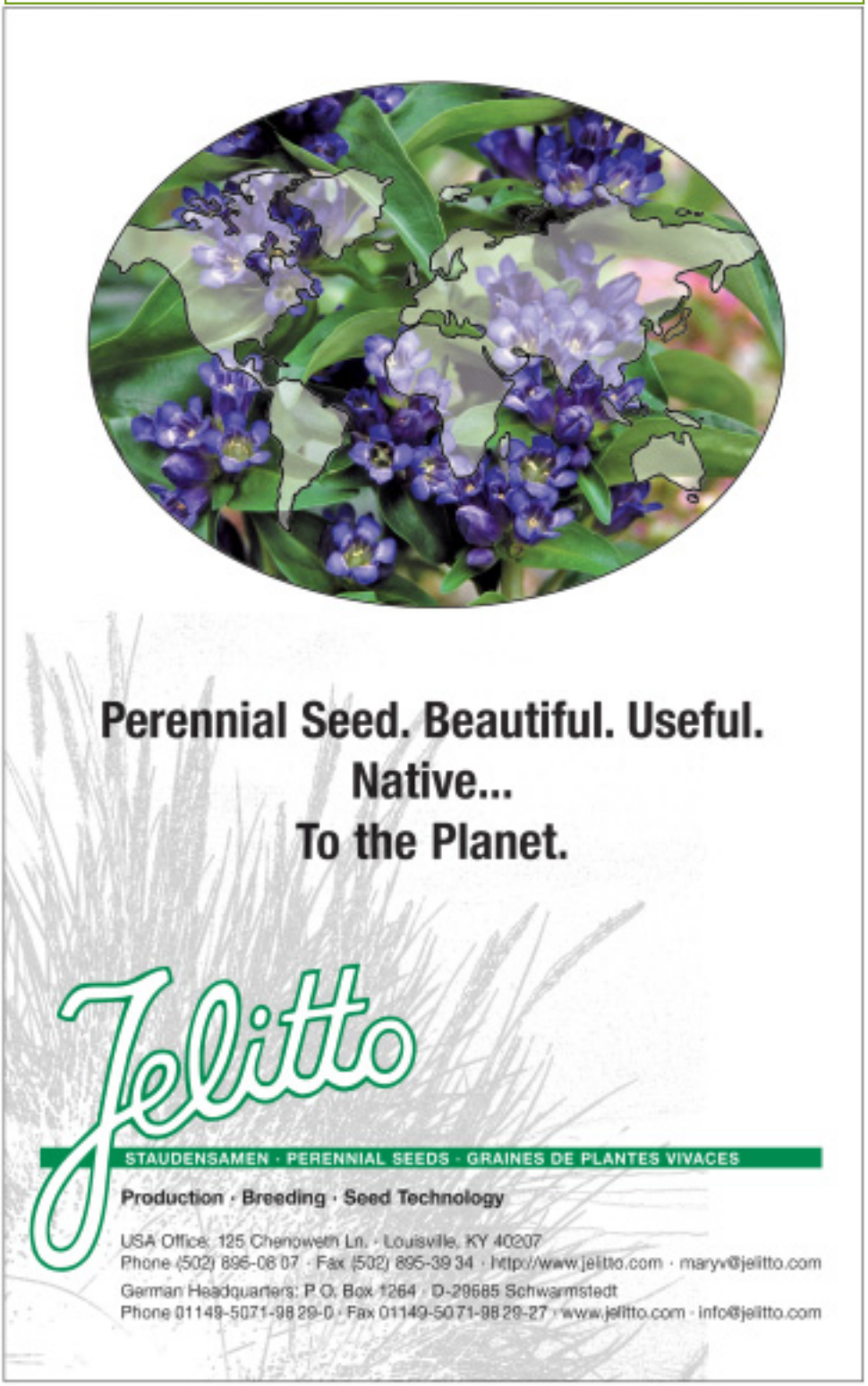
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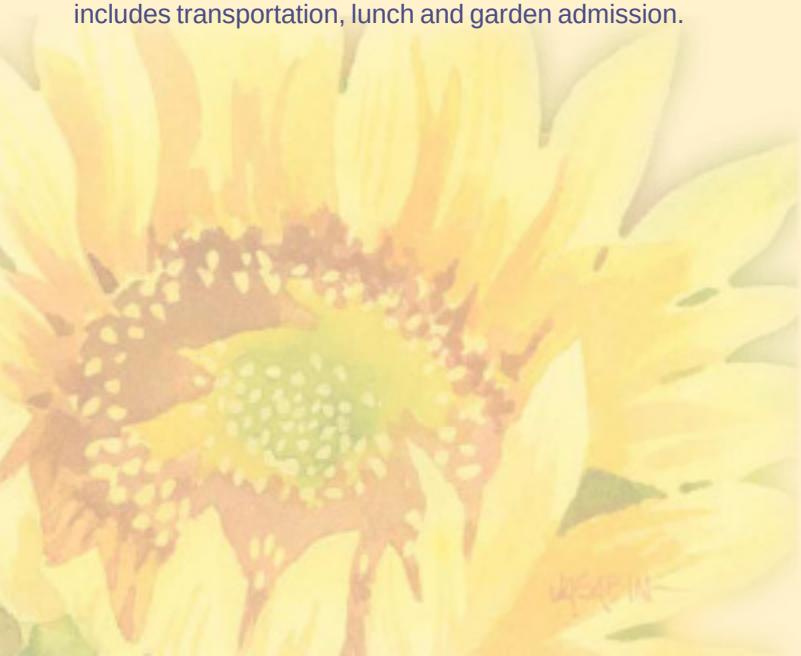
The August 28 deadline is very important. Reservations are taken on a first-come, first-served basis. When the room block is filled, the hotel is under no obligation to provide additional rooms, or to extend the conference rate. Don't wait for the last minute to call (631) 784-1234.

The Hyatt Regency is located in Hauppauge, New York, in the center of Long Island. For the best transportation directions, see the hotel's site at http://longisland.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/services/maps/index.jsp Southwest Airlines often offers reasonable rates to Long Island MacArthur Airport (Islip), only minutes from the hotel, which provides complimentary shuttle service. Guest must contact hotel for schedule either in advance or from airport baggage claim.

Post-Conference Bonus Tour

Join Allan Armitage Friday, October 9, as he visits some of Long Island's most exclusive and beautiful private and public gardens. Sites will include Old Westbury Gardens, Planting Fields Arboretum and Suzy Bales' magnificent six-acre estate garden. Registration is limited to 40, and will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Minimum registration is 30. Fee includes transportation, lunch and garden admission.



Grow and Show!

Members' flower donations are at the heart of the ASCFG Conference, and are needed to share and inspire the creativity of your fellow growers. Floral product (flowers, foliage, woodies, etc.) will be used for the design contest and to help decorate the hotel. A great opportunity for the public to see the beauty of our hard work. If you wish to ship floral material, please ship them to: Attn. Neil Caggiano, c/o Holland Flower Express, 101 Fairchild Ave., Plainview, New York, 11803. Flowers should arrive by Sunday, October 4.

Art from the Garden

The ASCFG Floral Design Competition gets more popular and more fun each year! You don't need to be a professional designer to participate—everyone is welcome. Work on your own, or with others from your Region. Containers will be available as well as tools (knives, shears) so you won't have trouble if you are flying. You may want to bring your own accessories that will highlight your regional flair.

Get Involved

Catch up with old friends. Meet new ones. Help out a few minutes in the Flower Room to process flowers, fill water buckets, and make arrangements for hotel decorations.

While You're Here

Long Island Wine Country has been said to be one of the most exciting wine producing regions in the country. Just 30 minutes away from Hyatt Regency, the wine country is a great place to visit during your stay. With more than 35 wineries, the area spans the entire east end of Long Island. Many local wineries offer tours where visitors can experience the beautiful scenery and learn about each vineyard. Guests can enjoy a wine tasting and purchase their favorites to take home. Find out more at www.liwines.com

Make the short trip from Hyatt Regency Long Island to New York City for all the excitement you can handle. Take in a Broadway show, see the sights, dine at some of the country's most renowned restaurants, visit museums, and enjoy the nightlife of the city that never sleeps. The Hyatt offers a complimentary shuttle to Ronkonkoma Station where the Long Island Railroad will transport you to Penn Station in about one hour and fifteen minutes, for approximately $10 each way.

Artwork courtesy of Jeriann Sabin,
Bindweed Farm, Blackfoot Idaho

Monday, October 5

Growers' School

The ASCFG Growers' School is a unique opportunity to spend a day with the fundamentals of cut flower production. Experienced growers and industry experts will share their ideas and practices.

8:00 am ***What to Grow: Plant and Variety Selection***
Chas Gill
Kennebec Flower Farm, Bowdoinham, Maine

9:00 am ***Keeping Cut Flowers Healthy***
Margery Daughtrey, LIHREC, Riverhead

10:00 am ***Break***

10:15 am ***Effective Insect Control***
Dan Gilrein, LIHREC, Riverhead

11:15 am ***Cost Accounting for New Growers***
Alison Wiley, Littleflowers, Newfield, New York

12:15 pm ***Lunch*** on your own

1:30 pm ***Keeping the Weeds at Bay***
Quinton Tschetter
Tschetter's Flowers, Oskaloosa, Iowa

2:30 pm ***How to Market Your Cut Flowers***
Josie Crowson, Josie's Fresh Flowers
Nacogdoches, Texas
Polly Hutchison, Robin Hollow Farm
Saunderstown, Rhode Island
Carolyn Tschetter, Tschetter's Flowers
Oskaloosa, Iowa

3:30 pm ***Make Your Flowers Last Longer!***
Chris Wien, Chas Gill and Alison Wiley

4:30 pm ***Q&A/wrapup***

5:00 pm ***Icebreaker*** - cash bar and hors d'oeuvres
All attendees welcome!

Tuesday, October 6

Educational Sessions

8:00 am ***New Varieties Festival***
Dave Dowling, Farmhouse Flowers & Plants
Brookeville, Maryland

9:30 am ***Increasing Efficiency***
John Bartok, University of Connecticut, Storrs

10:30 am ***The Cut Flower Industry in South America: Will Roses and Carnations become Domestic Cuts Again?***
Miguel Gomez, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

11:30 am ***Twenty Years of Peony Production: Varieties, Culture and Markets***
Ed Pincus, Third Branch Flower, Roxbury, Vermont

12:30 pm ***Lunch with Membership Meeting and Vendor Showcase***
Lunch is on us! Take a break between the morning sessions and the afternoon Trade Show to sit with old acquaintances or new friends. We'll have a brief organizational meeting, including voting for the next Board of Directors and other ASCFG business. Next, Trade Show vendors will introduce themselves and highlight their new services and products before the Show opens.

Trade Show

2:00 - 8:00 pm
Reception and Silent Auction
The Trade Show adds another networking opportunity to the Conference week. You'll have face-to-face-time with seed, plant and bulb suppliers, equipment companies and other vendors. An informal reception with hors d'oeuvres and regional specialties will keep you well fed. Don't forget your contributions for the ASCFG Research Foundations's Silent Auction, held this evening.

Wednesday, October 7

Tours

7:00 am
Buses leave the hotel

The **Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center** (LIHREC)is a campus of Cornell University. It was established in 1922 and is the only Research Center in the United States exclusively horticulture with specialists in floriculture, viticulture, vegetables, and woody ornamentals, as well as cross-commodity specialists in plant diseases, weed management, entomology and plant tissue culture. The 68-acre facility features state-of-the-art greenhouses, nursery and container production area, a vineyard, and a plant tissue culture facility. During this tour we will have a chance to see Dr. Mark Bridgen's breeding and trials of his new winter-hardy alstroemeria cultivars as well as the 2-acre herbaceous perennial trial gardens with more than 600 species and cultivars. There will be high tunnel demonstrations with field-grown cut chrysanthemums and other common cut flowers as well as special cultivar trials of sunflowers, zinnias, snapdragons, and many other varieties planted especially for the ASCFG meeting. The potted chrysanthemum trials will be in full bloom during the tour and Margery Daughtrey and Dan Gilrein will be discussing plant diseases and insects, respectively. A wagon tour of the farm will be available to those who are interested in seeing the field research of grapes, corn, pumpkins, and other vegetables.

Harbes Family Farm produces a wide range of cut flowers in addition to their fruits, vegetables, and wine grapes. The Harbes family has grown on Long Island for more than 20 years. With their expansion to three locations and a vineyard, all eight of the Harbes children have kept busy by taking an active part in farm operations, from plowing, pruning, and harvesting the fields to producing quality wine and running the farm stands.

Looking for the new and unusual? **Garden Treasure Nursery** specializes in them. With more than ten acres of production space, Garden Treasure provides a wide variety of perennials, shrubs, ornamental grasses and bamboo. Their plant selections are tested for hardiness in their beautiful display gardens.

Reception & Banquet

6:30 pm

Join your fellow attendees to discuss the day's tours, your newest cut flower discovery, or to argue about who has the worst weather. Relax with a great meal and join in the fun of the live auction that benefits the ASCFG Research Foundation.

Thursday, October 8

Crop Production

8:00 am - Noon

8:00 - 9:00 am
Lilies, Tulips and Other Bulbs
Bill Miller, Cornell University, Ithaca
9:00 - 10:00 am
Why We Grow Organically
Casey Steinberg, Old Friends Farm, Amherst, Massachusetts
10:00 - 11:00 am
Mums and Alstroemeria - What's New?
Mark Bridgen, LIHREC, Riverhead, New York
11:00 - Noon
Sunflowers: Everyone's Favorite
Chris Wien and Joyous Tata, Cornell University, Ithaca

Successful Events

8:00 am - 3:00 pm

8:00 - 9:30 am
Events Designed with Profit in Mind
Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI
10:00 - 11:30 am
From Farmer to Designer: Growers' Forum
Our panel of flower growers examines the unique challenges facing any grower interested in creating profitable events.
Four mini-lectures will be presented by
Missy Bahret, Becky Devlin, Polly Hutchison, and Thea Folls.
Topics will include marketing, client communications, planning strategies, and delivery, followed by a question and answer session.
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Behind the Scenes
Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI

2009 Conference Registration Form

Company Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

Student registration available to those currently enrolled in a certified horticulture, agriculture or floral design program. See discounted price below.

Payment Information:

❑ My check or money order (in U.S. funds) is enclosed

Please bill my: ❑ Mastercard ❑ Visa

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Cardholder's Name _____ Sec. Code _____

Signature _____

Make checks payable to the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, or ASCFG

NOTE: Spouse/partner or two company members of ASCFG member welcome at member rate. This does not mean "two for the price of one"; it means additional attendees pay the same price as the first person.

Cancellation Policy: A full refund will be paid if cancellation is received prior to August 1, 2009; one-half refunded prior to August 15, 2009; after August 28, 2009 no refund can be made. No exceptions.

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	**Growers' School** Monday, October 5 *Register by September 1. Limited to 85.* $150 Member, $175 Non-member	**Full Conference Registration** Tuesday - Thursday, October 6-8 Tours, Educational Sessions, Trade Show, Banquet *Growers' School not included* $395 Member before 9/1/09 $520 Non-member before 9/1/09 $440 Member after 9/1/09 $595 Non-member after 9/1/09 $100 Student	**Tours Only** Wednesday, October 7 $100 Member before 9/1/09 $130 Non-member before 9/1/09 $110 Member after 9/1/09 $145 Non-member after 9/1/09	**Educational Sessions Only** Tuesday and Thursday, October 6 & 8 $290 Member, $410 Non-member before 9/1/09 $350 Member, $470 Non-member after 9/1/09 $205 Member Single Day (indicate Tues. or Thurs.) $240 Non-member Single Day (indicate Tues. or Thurs. *Tours not included*	**Successful Events Session Only** Thursday, October 8 8:00 am-3:00 pm $ 50	**Additional Banquet** *1 banquet ticket is included with each full registration* Wednesday, October 7 $55 Member, $75 Non-member	**I'd like to join the ASCFG today!** $175	**Bonus Tour - Friday, October 9** $100	**TOTAL per person**

ALL ATTENDEES - Please indicate number attending banquet _____ Vegetarian total _____ **Questions? Call (440) 774-2887** **TOTAL DUE**

Return your payment and registration form to ASCFG: MPO Box 268 ◆ Oberlin, OH 44074-0268 ◆ fax (440) 774-2435

FROM *the Director*

Judy M. Laushman

I was intrigued by something in this issue's Back to Basics column: The growers interviewed by the SAF were more optimistic than the floral wholesalers and retailers. I conducted my own informal survey, and asked several ASCFG members to describe their place in the current economy. As usual with our growers, the responses were thoughtful, honest, and variable.

Ever the optimist, Vicki Stamback believes that "The economy is to each of us as we make it; it's all about attitude." She has good reason to be positive, since her sales are up over last year, which itself was a record year for her. This is in contrast to one of her florists, who predicted his own destiny when he told her "Well, we were down about 20% but that's where we thought we would be."

A grower in Wisconsin reports sales down 20-25% this entire year, and having to lay off people and dump "more product than I can ever remember." He agreed with others that "A whole lot less speculative buying is going on. If it's sold they buy, but they're not getting extra to make their coolers look plentiful." Carol Larsen, also in Wisconsin, says "Now that the initial thirst for something fragrant and blooming has been slaked I am seeing about a 20% drop in farmers' market sales from last year." She is, however, seeing an increased interest in wedding and event sales.

In Vermont, Ed Pincus says that most wholesale customers are down 20-40% compared to last year, and that many of his customers (florists and designers) are down over 50%. But his growing season has been great and flower quality is high. Ed is hopeful but worried. For another Northeast grower, Maureen Charde's farmers' market sales have been down 10 percent. She attributes this to the economy as well as to six weeks of rainy markets. Wet weather has also pushed her field planting behind, and sunflowers and zinnias will be late this year. But florists sales are up from first year with two buyers telling her that their customers have a strong interest in local flowers. Maureen is optimistic, "otherwise, I wouldn't be growing flowers."

Across the country, Diane Szukovathy had "A glorious, sunny spring like none I can remember in the Pacific Northwest, and that has probably helped flower sales. We're getting lots of availability inquiries for upcoming weddings through the summer. Overall, we feel fine about the rest of 2009, maybe because we have no time to pay attention to the news." Her business is in growth mode, so sales are up, though she can't tell if that's because she has more to sell, and more customers than last year, or because people are buying more flowers. The buyer at her grocery store says people have a renewed sense of nostalgia, which would explain good sales on old-fashioned flowers, and less interest in woody stems and unusual perennials.

The Northwest weather has given Kurt Mizée decent growing conditions and a quality crop. He is concerned that demand will be off enough that growers who come on earlier will not have enough stock moved and be selling out of the cooler well into his season.

Ray Gray sell chrysanthemums to gardeners, botanical gardens and a few cut flower growers (including several ASCFG members). Compared with last year, many orders from previous customers are up. About 30% of his customers are new, a result of them finding his web site, seeing his Buyers Guide ad, or receiving a catalog.

Also in Oregon, Tony Gaetz sells in two farmers' markets as well as for weddings and events. He has been tracking sales figures and noticed that from 2006-2008 their annual sales growth rate was 15%, 20%, and 8% respectively, but much of this was taking share in their markets. In 2009, sales are off 35%. Tony notes that the mid-week market is no longer attracting the numbers of 25-45 year olds as in the past, and have been replaced by senior citizens, who are less likely to buy flowers "unless they're for a reason". Pricing competition has also intensified. "With more vendors dividing the same sales pie, vendors are panicking and dumping product just for cash flow. Last weekend we had a vendor selling high quality tulips that had been placed in cold storage earlier in the season, for $1.00 per growers bunch (10 stems)."

In Texas, Rita Anders' market sales are "good", and even though she's now competing with another flower seller, she still sells out most Saturdays.

Pat Zweifel has found his wholesale sales are 30 to 50% behind, but in Indiana, Linda Chapman's wholesale business is "rocking". "It looks like our July sales of zinnia, buddleia, gooseneck and other products will be comparable, or even better (because I planted more) than previous years." Alice Vigliani, who specializes in peonies in Massachusetts, says her overall message is that sales are not so great, and her wholesalers blame the continually rainy weather.

In hindsight, it's not so surprising that growers are more optimistic than others in the supply chain. As Maureen points out, optimism is part of a grower's psychic makeup, a vital element in your job description. To grow flowers is an act of faith.

This October, bring your story to Hauppauge, New York and share your season at the National Conference. Tell us how your faith was—or wasn't—rewarded this year.

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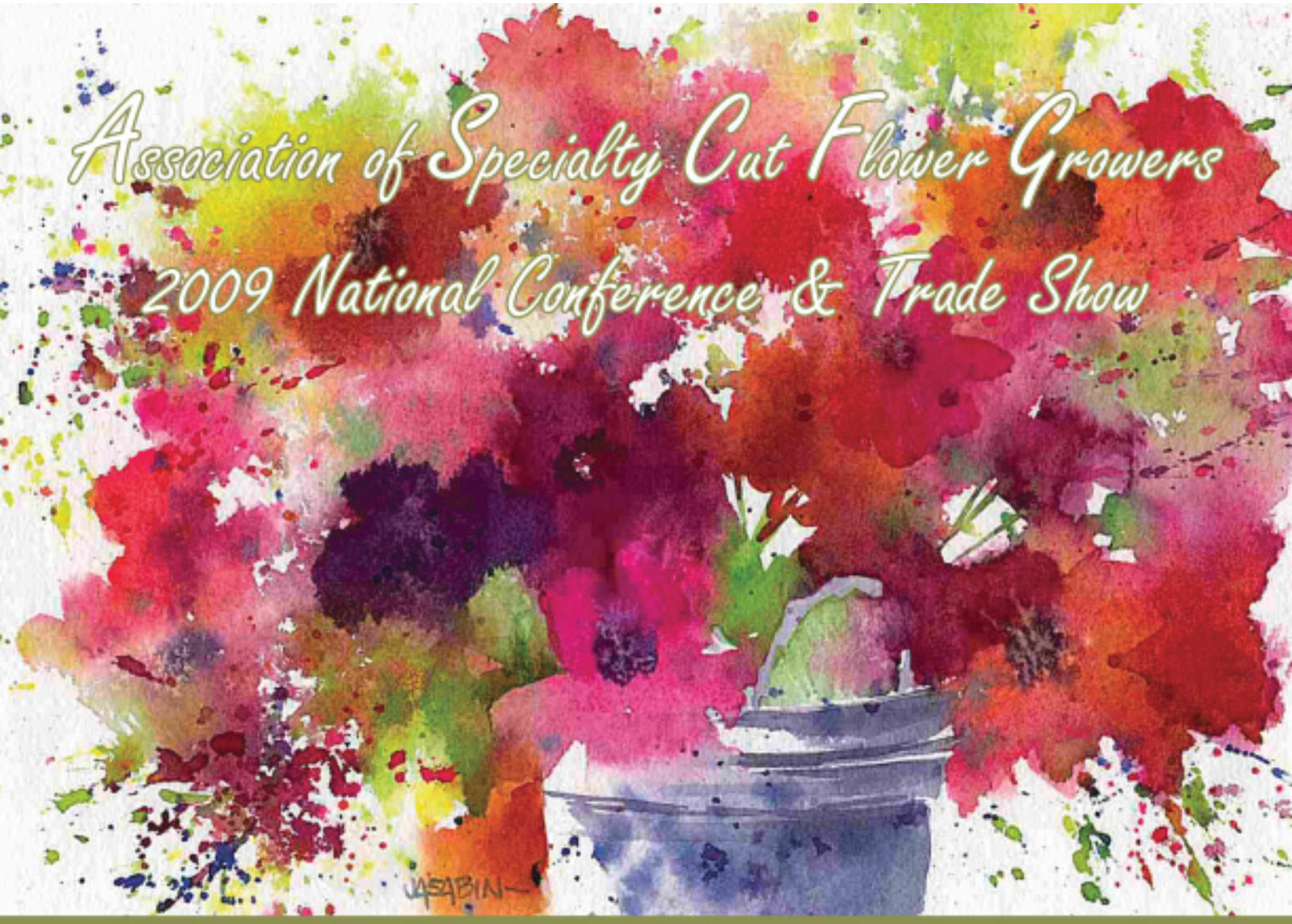
Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers
2009 National Conference & Trade Show
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October 5-8
Hauppauge, New York